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April 1996
Number 62

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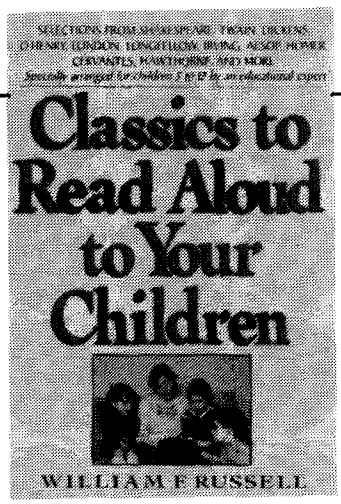

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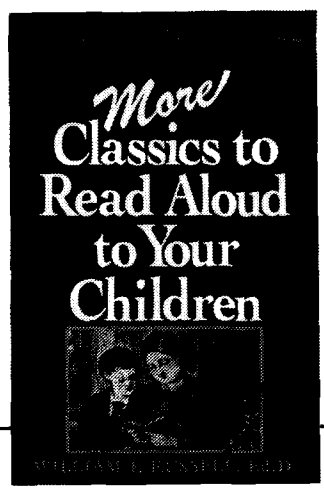

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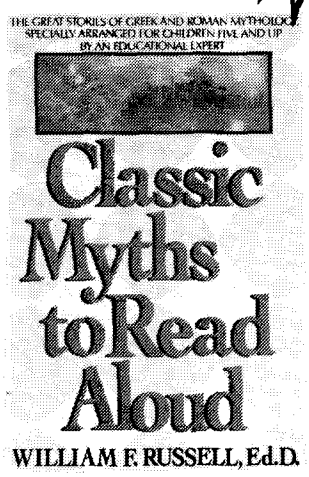

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
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Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $29 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, P.O. Box 3000 , Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. 1-800-783-4903. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. Copyright © 1996 by the Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

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FIRST THINGS

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Christian Exclusivism

The review of *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (January) struck me as a particularly wrong-headed effort to make two wrongs into a right. Not having read the book under review, I cannot say if the fault lies with author (S. Mark Heim) or reviewer (Paul J. Griffiths) alone.

The first wrong, in any event, is Christian exclusivism, the idea that Christianity is the *one and only way* to salvation. Intolerance has always seemed to me to be the great spiritual flaw of Christianity. It is the sort of spiritual flaw that not only poisons Christianity from within, but causes and has caused immeasurable suffering to non-Christians without. I am pleased the review at least recognizes this as a central problem for Christianity. Small consolation, however, given the "solution" suggested, namely, that all religions must now take up the Christian error of intolerance. For a war of one against all we should instead have a war of all against all? To propose that because Christianity is exclusivist therefore all religions should also become so strikes me as mad and dangerous. . . .

The real solution lies not in compounding intolerance, turning everyone into a bully, but rather in giving it up. Christianity and Christians must repent the heinous sin of exclusivism, rooting it out of their hearts. There are many ways to G-d, thank G-d. Nothing could be more obvious. My own path to G-d, for instance, Judaism, has always insisted that salvation is open to the righteous of all nations. Islam, for its part, holds the gates of salvation open to Christians and Jews. One may debate whether and in what manner the Islamic and Jewish paths are universal, but there is no doubt that they are broader than the particularistic "universalism" of Christian exclusivism. Hinduism, of course, goes beyond all three, recognizing millions, indeed billions, of pathways to G-d. Yes, at the end of time "He shall be One and His name shall be One," but on the many ways of time that lead to eternity, Christian exclusivism is an obstacle and roadblock. . . .

Richard A. Cohen
Department of Religious Studies
University of North Carolina
at Charlotte

Paul J. Griffiths replies:

Mr. Cohen's letter is a rant rather than an argument. He links together, in an unargued and hopelessly imprecise way, "exclusivism" and "intolerance." I can't tell what he means by either, although his letter rather suggests that for him "intolerance" simply means judging that someone else is wrong; if that's right, his own words are suffused with its spirit. In my review of Heim's book I tried to suggest that it is typical of religious traditions to proffer goals or ends to human beings, and to proffer them as unsurpassable. This is what differentiates properly religious goals from others. It is part of the grammar of Christian faith, certainly, to proffer such goals; trinitarian theology requires it. Several times each week, in public worship, I recite a creed that makes such claims. And I believe it. Believing it is quite compatible with judging that I am in no position to know who is saved and who is not; it requires of me only the judgment that whoever is saved is saved through Christ. Heim's book is a careful attempt to elucidate how people who are believing members of traditions that proffer such unsurpassable claims might come to think about those who are not, most especially about those who are believing members of other such traditions. This seemed and seems to me a worthy and interesting topic to think about. I'm sorry that the strength of Mr. Cohen's emotions makes it impossible for him to see its value. He would do well to read Heim's book, preferably in a calmer state of mind.

Babbitt and Religion

As a long-time student of Irving Babbitt (1865-1933) I am well familiar with the hostility directed against him by the intellectual powers-that-be since the early decades of the cen-

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tury. Only recently has the resurgence of interest in Babbitt's books and the expanding scholarly literature mitigated a tradition of often willful misrepresentation.

Gertrude Himmelfarb's "The Christian University: A Call to Counterrevolution" (January) presents a new and rather odd example of blatant distortion. Professor Himmelfarb cites Babbitt as a culprit in the secularization of the university, which was brought about, she contends, far less by "the idea of 'science'" than by "the idea of 'culture.'" The latter idea was a product of "the philosophy of rationalism" and was espoused in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries by certain "humanists," Babbitt prominent among them. These educators and intellectuals "thought that science . . . was as inimical to a liberal education as was religion."

To save space I have to forego broadly challenging this theory of secularization and its sweeping use of general terms. I must concentrate on the absurdly misleading depiction of Babbitt. It may be noted in passing that viewing him as a chief agent of the secularization of the university would make that development a rather recent phenomenon. Scholars would also have to abandon their view of Babbitt as an embattled intellectual outsider.

Let me respond only briefly to the curious allegation that Babbitt found science "inimical" to liberal education. He actually argued *against* traditionalist resistance to the critical spirit of modern science, saying that "one should . . . welcome the effort of the man of science at his best."

But Professor Himmelfarb's readers probably noted with particular interest her summary assessment of the allegedly secularizing intellectuals: "Some of these humanists were unbelievers, but they were not (except perhaps for Babbitt) aggressively antireligious."

Aggressively antireligious? Irving Babbitt? Are there *no* limits to what can be alleged against this man?

Fully demonstrating the gross inaccuracy of Professor Himmelfarb's depiction would be a matter of quoting Babbitt at length and citing relevant scholarship, including my own. Here, it may be said first that Babbitt considered himself to be not merely a friend but a defender of religion and that he was so regarded by devout Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and others who knew his work. In 1924 he wrote that eventually "the Catholic Church may perhaps be the only institution left in the Occident that can be counted on to uphold civilized standards." Babbitt did not preach to the choir, however, but tried to persuade honest modern skeptics and seekers who would reject a merely traditional approach to ethics and religion. Although he kept his distance from literalistic and dogmatic belief (which made T. S. Eliot, the Christian convert, uneasy), he emphatically affirmed and extensively wrote about the experiential reality of religion. The long essay that accompanies his translation from Pali of *The Dhammapada*, the Buddhist holy text, is one important example.

Babbitt saw it as his primary mission to explore the humanistic import of the transcendent power that he called the "inner check" or the "higher will." Yet he repeatedly stressed that this will has an "otherworldly," distinctively religious manifestation as well as a more "worldly," humanistic one. The power that should govern human life is, Babbitt insists, "ultimately divine." Taking care that his main emphasis on issues of aesthetics, ethics, and civilization not be misunderstood, he wrote, "I am not setting up humanism as a substitute for religion." He made clear that in a debate between naturalists and supernaturalists, he ranged himself "unhesitatingly on the side of the supernaturalists."

Although Babbitt's thought can be difficult, what he believed can be ascertained by actually reading what he wrote, something his critics have been strangely reluctant to do. . . .

Claes G. Ryn
Department of Politics
Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

Gertrude Himmelfarb replies:

I regret that Professor Ryn's passionate devotion to Irving Babbitt caused him to misread my remarks about him.

First, his letter makes it sound as if I had made Babbitt a "culprit" and "chief agent" of the secularization of the university. In fact I have only two passing references to him in my essay. The first has Babbitt "and other luminaries of American intellectual life" endorsing Matthew Arnold's definition of culture, "the best which has been thought and said in the world"—a comment that is indisputable (see Babbitt's essay on Arnold in *The Spanish Character*), and that certainly displays no hostility on my part; on the contrary, Arnold's definition is one I heartily endorse.

The second is the parenthetical reference to Babbitt as among the humanists who were unbelievers, but "not (except perhaps for Babbitt) aggressively antireligious." The "perhaps" modifies the "aggressively," and if I had been writing at greater length about Babbitt, I would have explained that his humanism was meant to be a spiritual alternative to any dogmatic, institutional religion based upon theology or divine revelation. This is why he was so well disposed to Buddhism, which he admired as "the least mythological of religions."

Professor Ryn quotes Babbitt's remark about the Catholic Church perhaps eventually upholding "civilized standards." But there is another famous remark he does not quote which may warrant the word "aggressively." "There is the enemy!" Babbitt told his great friend and fellow humanist, Paul Elmer More, when they were taking a walk and passed a church. "There is the thing I hate!"

Professor Ryn misquotes and therefore distorts my references to science. He omits two important clauses in the sentence he cites. What I wrote was that humanists "thought that science (*or too heavy a dose of science*) was as inimical to a liberal education as was religion *(or too sectarian a religion).*" (I've italicized the omitted phrases.) There is no question that that sentence, as I wrote it, accurately reflects Babbitt's views.

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(Here too he was entirely in agreement with Matthew Arnold.) Babbitt's *Literature and the American College* (published in 1908, the period I was speaking about) was an indictment of the two evils that he associated with democratic culture: romanticism, deriving from Rousseau who is said to have encouraged the excesses of individualism and the subversion of standards; and science, epitomized by Darwinism, which Babbitt believed to be materialistic and naturalistic, thus a denial of man's higher nature.

This kind of humanism, I made it clear, was only the first stage (and a relatively innocuous one) in the secularization of the university. It is in its later stages that a political agenda has replaced a religious one, that secularism has proved hostile not only to particular religions but to the very idea of religion, and that the "death of truth" is trumpeted together with the "death of God."

A Wall of Our Own

John Rodden's report ("Hard to Remember," January) of his encounter with German history teacher Frau Hintze's struggles to free her mind from the tyranny of Marxist groupthink was moving and chilling, especially the memorable line, "The Wall was in our head."

As I was reading this piece my anticipation for what seemed to me the obvious and ironic punch line grew—but it never came. Consider the following quotations: "I never really took seriously any opposition-al viewpoint. . . . It was 'incorrect.'" "Only one opinion on a topic reigned. . . . I didn't take into account other opinions." "We were directed in our course of studies in college to think a certain way. Too many teachers . . . teach ideologically. . . . [They don't] foster independence of mind and awareness of other viewpoints." And perhaps the saddest: "I just wasn't strong enough to pursue the truth. . . . By cutting us off from the truth, [the nation] made cowards of us all."

Bunched together like this, don't these lines provide a fitting description of the American academy today?

John Bolt
Calvin Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, MI

Once-Born, Twice-Born

James Nuechterlein's "Starting Over" (January) was so thoughtful and perceptive that it seems mere quibbling to take issue with it. I did have a problem, however, with the implications of some of his statements. I have experienced one of those "radical transformations," those "miracles of grace," that Mr. Nuechterlein says are "not the norm." Over a period of years, I underwent a radical conversion from being a hedonistic skeptic to being a born-again Christian. This transformation has affected my whole outlook, and it has led to dramatic moral changes in my life.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James identified two basic types of religious temperament, what he called the "once-born" and the "twice-born." Once-born and twice-born people cannot understand each other: the once-born tend to find the twice-born neurotic and unstable, while the twice-born find the once-born dull and shallow. Mr. Nuechterlein's article seems to me to be a beautifully written expression of the once-born way of looking at things, which is why I suppose I tend to find it problematic.

I don't know how common radical transformations or miracles of grace really are. I am a pastor of a mainline Protestant church, and I find that most of my congregants find the notion of being "born again" rather incomprehensible. But I suspect that miracles of grace are far more common that most of us realize. . . .

We need to be able to offer hope to desperate, despairing people. For people who already have their act pretty much together, Mr. Nuechterlein's wisdom is helpful. But for those who are trapped in drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual sin, skepticism, or other forms of bondage to Satan, only the miracle of God's grace can save them. . . .

(The Rev.) David J. Armstrong
St. John's United Church of Christ
Egg Harbor City, NJ

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This Time

The Children's Hour

James Nuechterlein

My April calendar reminds me that my oldest child celebrates her birthday this month. Which in turn reminds me of the mysteries and puzzlements of child-rearing. Which in its turn reminds me, once again, why I am a cultural conservative.

Some of that is obvious. It's true: if having a teenage daughter doesn't make you a conservative, nothing will. A sexist statement? Not really. You simply recall the self-absorbed carelessness of yourself as a young man. Young women were better socialized, which made them at once more self-possessed and more vulnerable. Most reasonable people shudder, in retrospect, at their adolescence. All those potential disasters so narrowly avoided. Little wonder that those same people, looking back, substitute for their juvenile demands for more freedom an adult suspicion that their parents should have been more strict.

But that is only the beginning. At the heart of conservatism is a sense of human limits, an understanding that life is fragile and uncertain and that we are fools to suppose that we are in control of our destinies. Child-rearing makes evident, more than most enterprises, the futility of thinking we can shape life to our desires.

There's an odd contradiction at work here. On the one hand, parents exercise enormous influence on their children. We made them: they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. We provided, if in complex and unpredictable ways, their genetic makeup. The physical, intellectual, and temperamental qualities that will together shape and direct their lives were determined, however unknowingly, by us.

More than that. In the critical early years of their lives, children experience reality pretty much as their parents create it for them. We are their world. We provide—by what we say and, even more, by what we do—their foundational ideas, beliefs, and sense of what life is all about. Psychologists differ as to how determinative early experience is in shaping life outcomes, but none deny that it is very important indeed. As the twig is bent . . .

Yet, for all that, our sense of control is illusory. In the end, our children baffle us. They develop in ways we did not intend and, at least some of the time, would not have preferred. We may have provided the basic stuff of their being, but the final contours of their DNA—and of their lives—are quite beyond us. Whatever the influence of nurture, nature more often than not has its way. I recall in my own case how my wife and I looked on in wonder as, from earliest infancy, our three children displayed distinctive qualities of temperament—quite different from each other—that we could not possibly have shaped and that have persisted throughout their lives. (They are all now in their twenties.) As the old saying has it, they were simply born that way.

And whatever parents' importance to their children's early development, that influence is quickly enough countered—and often overridden—by other shapers of the self: schools, books, friends, even, God help us all, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and MTV. To share a house with a teenager is to rediscover, just after you had gotten used to it with your spouse, the meaning of otherness. As my friend Gil Meilaender has noted in another context, any lingering illusion of your influence on their lives is removed by the all-purpose teenage response to proffered parental wisdom, "Right, Dad."

All this, I concede, is exaggerated. However mysterious our children may at times seem to us, we were not, we are not, without influence on their lives. Even if we know we cannot direct them precisely in the way they should go, we have the responsibility to act as if we could and to strive to make whatever influence we do have a beneficial one. We have, if nothing else, the same primary responsibility as the physician: at least do no harm. (Though of course, even if only in ways of which we are not aware, harm will be done. Philip Larkin's jaundiced lines are not without point: "They f--- you up, your mum and dad. / They may not mean to, but they do. / They fill you with the faults they had / And add some extra, just for you.")

So we do the best we can, knowing all the while that the outcome is only marginally in our hands. We know that partially from memory of our own relationship with our parents: we're sure they made a difference, but few of us would place on them the major part of the blame (or credit) for how we turned out. (There also lurks in most children a lingering sense of profound difference from parents and siblings. How did I get into this weird family?) We know it as well from observation of families around us. It is at least occasionally the case that bad children happen to good parents. And, more happily, the converse.

There are benefits in recognizing the limits of parents' responsibility for their children's lives. For all our society's necessary concern with how badly we are managing the business of "moral formation," we should not suppose that that is a simple or guaranteed process. There's no foolproof manual for

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raising good kids. You do what you can—and say your prayers. It takes more than a village to raise a child. It takes the grace of God.

There are consolations in this sense of limits as well. You can even, if you're perverse enough, play it as a no-lose situation. I used to announce regularly to our children that their mother and I had supplied them with good genes and the rest was up to them. We would take full credit for their successes; their failures were entirely their responsibility.

That was not meant seriously, of course, but there is, it turns out, a serious point behind it. It is morally necessary that, whatever the actual case, parents assume significant responsibility for the shape of their children's lives. It is morally destructive for children to operate on that same assumption—especially in the negative. There is something infinitely sad in the spectacle of putative grown-ups who can't stop picking endlessly at the wounds of childhood and who choose to adopt *Mommie Dearest* as the story of their lives. Such people will never, in the most elementary sense, get a life. And even if Larkin is right, there's really nothing else to do with our lives but get on with them. FT

Let This Green Earth

Hildegard of Bingen on her deathbed, September 1179

That polished, hot smell
like a room closed too long—
is there an open flame?

Such flickering in the shadows,
swirls of marble, sea pebbles,
then deep forest green.
How is it I see these now?

In those hours from four to sext,
do your reading, daughters.
You will have from Easter
to October for outdoor work.

Test the candles, Clementia—
that sweet scent. See them lit.
Hang them in the hallway
outside the chapel. For thirty days,
remember, after I am dead.

Did I not say that I would die
in mid-September? Too long
this dryness in my marrow.

That form on the wall,
the crest and dagger of purple—
and there, a yellow orb,
a diamond flanked by darts.

Those colors, Clementia, in the center—
gold and red, cerise, then amber—
how like arcs of lightning.
The light of Christ.

Let the rainfall be grace.
Let this green earth take me.

Stella Nesanovich

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Opinion

Marriage Anyone?

Walter Berns

Almost 70 percent of the American people have indicated their opposition to "same-sex" marriages (males with males, females with females), but neither they nor their elected representatives are likely to cast the decisive vote in this matter. Like other moral issues—abortion, for example—this one is scheduled to be decided in the courts.

In fact, it may already have been decided (potentially, for the entire nation) by Hawaii's state supreme court in a case involving the denial of marriage licenses to three gay and lesbian couples. Hearing the case on appeal in May 1993, the court said that the state's marriage statute will be held to be a violation of the equal protection clause of the state constitution—unless the state can show a compelling reason why the "marital relation" should be restricted to a male and female.

No one, not even the opponents of same-sex marriages (mainly Catholics, Mormons, and Evangelicals), believes that the state of Hawaii will be able to do this. As any experienced litigator will tell you, the compelling state interest test is almost impossible to meet. Indeed, it has been the means by which the courts have dismantled a variety of discriminatory state laws. Here the state constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, and, to quote one of the proponents, if Wilma is permitted to marry Barney, but Fred is not permitted to marry Barney, then Fred is obviously being discriminated against on the basis of his sex.

What argument can the state make? It might be inclined to quote the Bible; but that argument fails on church-state grounds. Or argue that, properly understood, marriage is a sacrament; but the state permits civil marriages, and there is nothing sacramental, or even solemn, about a marriage performed by a justice of the peace. Or that, by definition, marriage is a contract according to which the parties "reciprocally engage to live with each other during their joint lives," and that homosexual relationships (at least in the case of males) are inherently unstable; but half of the male-female marriages contracted in this country now end in divorce. Or insist that marriage is traditionally and necessarily connected with the family, which is to say, that it is entered into with the idea of children (and offer as proof of this the once universal practice of the wife taking the husband's name in order that it then be passed on to the children as evidence that the husband is indeed their father); but many a marriage is childless and, what is more, is intended to be childless and no less legal for that. Or, finally, and in desperation, that homosexuality is unnatural; but, as Freud told us, the natural (or as he put it, the original) purpose of man's "sexual drive" is the gaining of pleasure, and it is obvious that pleasure can be gained in a variety of ways.

All these failing, what argument can succeed, not with the public but in the courts? The state has been put in a position similar to that of parishioners who, when the bans were published by the priest or minister, used to be asked (and in some places may still be asked) to declare whether they know of any "cause, or just impediment, why these two persons should not be joined in holy matrimony." But, unlike those parishioners, Hawaii is being asked to do this at a time when no cause is likely to be accepted and no impediment recognized.

The consequences of its failure to prevail on retrial (now scheduled for this summer) will not be confined to Hawaii. Like it or not, every state in the union will be affected. Homosexual couples from around the country will go to Hawaii in order to join in marriage, just as heterosexual couples from around the country now go to Nevada in order to separate by divorce. Then, on their return home, the couples will claim all the benefits, particularly the financial benefits (social security, pensions, inheritance, joint tax returns, dependent tax deductions, etc.), enjoyed by other married couples. Thus, the states will be asked to recognize homesexual marriages, something no state has been willing to do.

The usual practice—it is called "comity"—is for a state to recognize all legal marriages contracted in other jurisdictions. A handful of states have formalized the process by adopting what are called validation statutes. Nebraska's, a typical example, reads: "All marriages contracted without the state, which would be valid by the laws of the country [or the state] in which the same were contracted, shall be valid in all courts and places in this state." This was obviously written without regard to the possibility that the day might come when some state would legalize homosexual marriages, thereby making them legal in Nebraska. But that's the plain consequence of the statute.

And it is not the only consequence. If, under the terms of its own law, a state is required to recognize a homosexual marriage legally contracted in Hawaii, and since, under the terms of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, it is forbidden to "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws," then, in the present climate, it will be hard-pressed to avoid having to recognize a homosexual marriage performed locally.

In the wake of the Hawaiian court's decision, the

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state of Utah sought to prevent this by amending its marriage validation statute, specifically excluding homosexual marriages. So far, so good. But Article IV of the Constitution of the United States contains the following provision: "Full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other State." Under this provision, a state must recognize a divorce granted in Nevada, and the day may come when it will be required to recognize a homosexual marriage performed in Hawaii.

What now stand in the way of this possibility are a couple of Supreme Court decisions distinguishing between a divorce and a marriage: divorce being regarded as a legal judgment (and thus entitled to full faith and credit regardless of the public policy of the respective states), and marriage as merely a public act or record (and thus not so entitled). But the Court will be under pressure from the gay community to abolish this distinction. Indeed, it has already been abolished in the case of common law marriages, which, like divorces, require a legal judgment to affirm their existence. This ruling was delivered in 1991 by the Superior Court of New York, and so far applies only in New York, but the issue is certain to be raised in other states and, since it involves a federal question, will ultimately have to be resolved by the Supreme Court. If, as is likely, the Court agrees that states must give full faith and credit to common law marriages entered into elsewhere, why not to other legal marriages? It would certainly be bizarre and unlikely if common law marriages were to be regarded as having a higher legal status than ordinary, legally licensed marriages.

What can the states do to prevent this? Surely they cannot rely on Hawaii to make their case. Judging from the debates now taking place there, the state government of Hawaii can be likened to Byron's Julia, who, "whispering [she] would ne'er consent—consented." Led by Utah, the other states will put up a fight, but they are not likely to prevail. Unlike their opponents, the gays and lesbians are well organized, and well supported in the liberal press and by the ever-vigilant ACLU, all of which makes their victory likely. With what consequences? Very few, they insist; and none of them unsettling. All they want, or all they say they want, is to be treated like everybody else.

Fair enough, up to a point; in fact, quite right. But if their goal is equal treatment, why are they opposed to laws—such as the compromise measure proposed in Hawaii—requiring private businesses and state and local governments to accord to "domestic partnerships" the same benefits and privileges enjoyed by regularly married couples? Since local governments and thousands of businesses around the country are already doing this voluntarily, the goal of equal treatment would seem to be easily within their reach.

But whatever the case with the rank and file, some high-profile gays are obviously after bigger game. They want to change the marriage laws because they want to change the culture, or, as they are inclined to say, the "bourgeois" culture. When viewed, as they view themselves, as part of the broader countercultural movement, it becomes apparent that their purpose is to undermine the traditional idea of the family: the family as the building block of society, the family of fathers and mothers who naturally care for their children, who regard them as hostages to the future, and, because of this, care for the society in which those children will have to live.

Students of the *Republic* will know that Plato proposed to abolish the family, not merely to undermine it but to abolish it altogether. Less well known, perhaps, is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's response, which is very much in point here. Plato, he said, would have us believe that there is no need "for a natural base on which to form conventional ties; as though the love of one's nearest were not the principle of the love one owes the state, as though it were not by means of the small fatherland which is the family that the heart attaches itself to the large one; as though it were not the good son, the good husband, and the good father who makes the good citizen!"

A very sensible statement that, one that the Founders of this country would have found congenial, or at least acceptable. But because it is not likely to carry much weight with our sexually liberated judges, I propose, and quite seriously, that the Republicans do what the Democrats cannot and, therefore, will not do, namely, adopt a plank in their 1996 party platform pledging their opposition to same-sex marriages. That would send a message to the judges; it might also win the presidential election.

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Alone for Others

Glenn Tinder

Rarely, in our times, do social and political theorists praise solitude. Again and again such thoughtful writers as Alasdair MacIntyre and Robert Bellah tell us that moral rectitude, fundamental truthfulness, and all of the other virtues and skills that make us human depend upon society: upon our having a lifelong place within a social order and contemplating the historical "narrative" that defines the social order. While all this is no doubt true, it is no less true that our humanity depends on our capacity for being alone.

Christians may be disinclined to protest the neglect

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of solitude. Their ultimate goal, the kingdom of God, is after all a society, and their supreme moral principle, love, is a decidedly social virtue. Yet even a moment's consideration of Christ must give them pause. The life and death of Christ were both strongly marked by solitude. True, Christ was accompanied in his mission by his disciples. But it is striking how little comprehension they seemed to have either of his words or of the destiny he was living out. At the end, in Gethsemane, they could not watch with him even one hour. And when he was arrested, all of them "forsook him and fled." The lone figure of Christ on the Cross is perhaps the starkest symbol of solitude our culture possesses. Aren't Christians forced to entertain the thought that solitude is closely connected with sanctity?

Traditionally, of course, they have. The figure of St. Anthony is a classical representation of the spirituality that flourishes in solitude; and St. Anthony is only one of the many fourth-century "desert fathers" who withdrew from society into the wilderness. The hermit is an established type in both Western and Eastern Christianity, and monastic institutions, even though striving for a common and closely knit way of life seemingly at the opposite pole from solitude, have often been linked with hermetical institutions and practices of one sort or another. Near our own day, the traditional Christian recognition of solitude was expressed by Cardinal Newman in his well-known saying, "The soul alone, face to face with God alone."

Christians, then, have good grounds, both in Scripture and in tradition, for questioning the prevailing emphasis on society. They can do this in some part simply by appealing to common sense. On the one hand, society is stubbornly and radically imperfect. It is, as Aristotle makes clear, grounded in military and economic necessity. It follows that the final standard governing its actions must be expediency. The principle that the individual is to be treated as an end, and never merely as a means to some other end, cannot possibly rule the life of any society. Every war shows this unmistakably. Economic developments frequently do so as well: the transition to a market economy in Russia, for example, a change vital to the health of Russian society, inevitably works hardship on individuals when inefficient state-owned enterprises are privatized and "streamlined." On the other hand, we all recognize in our most serious moments that we must decide certain things—for example, how to conduct ourselves in an ambiguous situation or what to believe—all alone. If necessary, society must be defied.

Realizing the significance of solitude, however, depends finally on spiritual considerations. The spiritually crucial experience of guilt, for example, is always solitary; conscience does not tell me that *we* are guilty—at least, this is not its most forceful message—but that *I* am guilty. Correspondingly, the faith that I am justified by the Cross in spite of my guilt is maintained in solitude: I am justified by my own, and no one else's, faith. And when I embark on the journey toward sanctification, I am singled out from all others by an unquenchable consciousness of moral responsibilities I alone can fulfill. Even the knowledge that I will die, so essential to my spiritual being, is knowledge of an intimately personal kind; I know that my death will be unsharable. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to suggest that solitude is the strait gate, spoken of in Matthew, through which all must pass in order to reach eternal life. "One man does not become blessed," says Saint Augustine, "by the blessedness of another."

Not that solitude is entirely safe. In *Notes from Underground,* Dostoevsky presents a character in whom solitude nourished the traits of the mass man and the terrorist. Dostoevsky's portrait suggests a distinction between two different kinds of solitude: the self-absorbed and the communal. The solitude of the underground man was a form of self-absorption. It meant being embroiled day and night in his own resentments and obsessions. In communal solitude, however, one stands clear of alienating social constraints and is steadily attentive to other human beings and to God. Such solitude as this is a readiness for community; it is the solitude of Christ, of love on the Cross.

To speak of communal solitude is implicitly to mark out community as something different from society. Social theorists today seem largely unaware of any such distinction, and this is why they pay so little attention to solitude. Society, we might say, is the outward order; community, the inward connection. Society is more or less impersonal, hierarchical, and instrumental; community is personal, egalitarian (in affirming the mystery and consequent incomparability of persons), and an end in itself. Strictly speaking, the kingdom of God is not a society but a community, whereas every historical collectivity is predominantly a society, containing at best ephemeral fragments of community. As Ferdinand Tönnies—who may have originated the distinction—insisted, society (*Gesellschaft*) is alien and forbidding ("one goes into society as one goes into a strange country"), while community (*Gemeinschaft*) is good ("the expression 'bad community' violates the meaning of the word"). Writers who ignore the distinction must also ignore solitude. Almost any society not in a manifest state of disintegration is spoken of as a community. If this were really the case, if every orderly society were a community, solitude would be little needed, for we are communal beings and in a full community one would realize simultaneously unabridged selfhood and perfect unity with others. In even the most harmonious societies, however, our communal nature is in some measure violated and we

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are forced to separate ourselves from others in order to protect ourselves from false relationships. We are forced into solitude for the sake of community.

From this standpoint we can understand the provisional truth inherent in individualism. Social theorists who neglect solitude logically enough condemn individualism; today, individualism is as rarely praised as is solitude. In our fallenness, however, individualism possesses a kind of truth. We have fallen into a condition of communal atomization, and the kind of solidarity we attain through society does not overcome that condition but conceals it. In doing this, it renders it irreparable. To condemn individualism is to blind ourselves to the need for solitude, and that, in turn, is to become willing captives of society.

Plainly, solitude is good only in the sense that it is necessary; it is not good in itself. It has been called "incommunicability"—a consciousness (it might be of guilt, for example, or of mortality) that is largely unsharable. The necessity of solitude arises from our fallenness. Solitude is a burden laid upon us by our having turned our backs on God. In doing this, we have turned our backs also on our fellow human beings and find ourselves largely deprived of true relationships. It is tragic that this has occurred; indeed, the fall into incommunicability is the primal catastrophe at the source of history. But nothing is gained by pretending that it never happened.

It is scarcely too much to say that in a society stressing as strongly as America does the importance of social participation, everything of supreme importance depends on there being the counterweight of communal solitude. If you have never, all alone, tried to define your major convictions, you cannot enter into truth-seeking conversation and thus are incapable of deep human relations. If you cannot be apart from others, you cannot engage in prayer and meditation and thus cannot enter into genuine relations with God. If you recoil from solitude, it may even be said, you are politically disabled; you necessarily lack the spirit of independence needed to stand for what is right in the public realm.

Yet, since the burden of solitude is the burden of personal responsibility and of mortality, we try continually to cast it off. We follow a route directly contrary to that of the desert fathers: We flee from the wilderness of solitude into society. Today, society beguiles us into doing this; through such devices as television, bureaucratic organization, and the conformist pressures arising from mass democracy, it tries ceaselessly to engross us in illusions of community. It may be that one of the ways in which God intends that Christians be the salt of the earth is by their serving as exemplars of Christly solitude.

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The New Abortion Debate

Robert P. George and Ramesh Ponnuru

Over the last few months, certain intellectuals on both sides of the debate over abortion have publicly expressed newfound doubts about their side's positions and tactics. Notable defenders of the abortion license, such as Naomi Wolf, have conceded that abortion is no ordinary surgical procedure but is the deliberate taking of a human life (a concession that arguably makes their continued defense of that license more, rather than less, ominous in its implications).

On the other side, some of those who have long understood the literally homicidal nature of abortion are raising questions about the advisability and even the legitimacy of seeking its legal prohibition. That unavoidably divisive effort, they believe, hinders the formation of a broader coalition that would seek to lower the abortion rate by changing the culture. The pro-life movement would do more, they argue, to reduce the number of abortions by stressing the need for teen abstinence, easier adoption laws, and crisis pregnancy centers than by continuing to push (ineffectually, so far) for a general prohibition of abortion. And reducing the number of abortions, they reason, is after all the pro-life goal. Legal restrictions are merely a means toward that end.

Some of those making this argument do, to be sure, advocate legal restrictions on the most widely reviled abortions, especially those taking place in the third trimester. Most on the pro-life side—ourselves included—agree that these restrictions should be the immediate objectives, not least because the effort to enact them would educate the public about the radicalism of the current abortion regime and establish principles that, by logical implication, demand a general prohibition of abortion. But we also believe that such a prohibition should remain the ultimate goal and that the arguments against it undermine the case for even modest restrictions.

Anti-abortion laws are not merely means to the end of reducing the number of abortions. That is a primary goal, of course, but not the only one. Legal recognition of the inherent dignity of unborn human life is an important goal in its own right. Even if nobody chose to exercise the supposed right to abortion, the fact that human life could be unjustly taken with legal impunity would remain a blot on the nation's conscience; law would still have to be brought into conformity with right. No just society can declare that some human beings do not deserve

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the protection of the law. Consider the analogous case of slavery: had the federal government resolved to purchase the freedom of slaves, rather than ban slavery, it could hardly be said to have thereby guaranteed the equal protection of the laws.

Another argument against prohibition—one that rejects it as illegitimate, and not merely inadvisable—has been advanced by William Bennett. He asserts that those who support the Human Life Amendment must logically support prosecuting women who procure abortions and doctors who perform them as first-degree murderers, the implication presumably being that such draconian policies are unthinkable. This argument has long been a staple of pro-choice polemics. Ronald Dworkin has perfected the technique: explain that the declared premises of the pro-life position would logically entail some unacceptable conclusion; note that pro-lifers do not in fact support this conclusion; and infer triumphantly that they do not believe what they claim to believe. At this point the pro-choicer can score pro-lifers for hypocrisy, divine "real" motivations for their position that reflect badly on them, refute their "real" premises (which always turns out to be easier than refuting their stated premises), or combine all three.

It is, however, a curious argument for Bennett to make, since he favors expanding legal protection for the unborn. If such efforts were based on the premises that fetuses are living human beings and that direct abortion is therefore unjustified killing, those efforts would be open to the same objection Bennett makes against the Human Life Amendment. Odder still, Bennett does not argue against those premises. If the premises were true and they entailed the conclusion he believes they do, we would just have to swallow hard and work to apply first-degree murder charges in abortion cases.

Yet the conclusion, that abortionists and their clients should receive the penalties meted out to first-degree murderers, does not logically follow from the premise that abortion is unjustified killing. Nor were such penalties historically included in American anti-abortion laws based on that premise.

One might wish to have lower penalties for abortion than for first-degree murder for a number of reasons. The existence of profound moral disagreement on the issue does not relieve us of the obligation to defend a basic human right; but it does suggest that the punishment for violations of that right should be no harsher than required to deter them. In addition, pro-life legislators have to take seriously the law's function as a teaching instrument, particularly in a legalistic culture. That function is one reason anti-abortion laws are necessary. But the law imposed on our nation by judicial fiat in *Roe v. Wade* has, in effect, taught people for almost a quarter century either that they have a right to take human life or that abortion is not the taking of human life. In rectifying this wrong, the law should avoid harshly punishing those who have learned this false lesson all too well. Eventually it may be necessary and proper to stiffen penalties against abortionists; but it is legitimate to take into account that the moral and intellectual weaknesses that make people willing to consider or perform abortions are themselves in part a consequence of our laws and institutions.

Abortionists could be considered less culpable or malicious than first-degree murderers: concern for the pregnant women's dire circumstances or a sincere but misguided view of the status of unborn human beings induce some physicians to perform abortions. Furthermore, the punishment could be scaled to fit the social consequences of the crime: ordinary murder typically causes more pain among the family and friends of the victims than does abortion; the risk of murder decreases the ability of people to participate in and move through society without fear; and if ordinary murder were not severely punished, people's efforts to protect themselves could end up endangering others.

And there are still other considerations. Lower penalties could increase the effectiveness of anti-abortion laws by making juries more likely to convict. Women seeking abortions could be (and historically often were) exempted from penalties altogether, due both to mitigating circumstances—a great many women are really secondary victims of the abortion industry—and to the need to get testimony to help convict the abortionist.

The only conclusion that does logically follow from pro-life premises is that governments have a duty generally to prohibit abortion and to enforce that prohibition to the best of their ability. Prudential judgments determine how that should be done. Jail terms for performing illegal abortions cannot be rejected in principle. But the penalty could be as mild as a fine. It could well be that the mere revocation of medical licenses would be sufficient to deter abortionists, particularly if backed up by laws that would impose heavy fines and even imprisonment for people who perform abortions without medical licenses.

It is not the prohibitionists but their critics who face a logical dilemma. If abortion does not warrant prohibition by the state, it can only be because the unborn are not living human beings with a right not to be killed. And if they are not, then it is difficult to see why public policy should be concerned to deter abortion at all. It is, after all, the status of the fetus as a distinct, unique human being that leads even pro-choice writers such as Naomi Wolf to acknowledge that abortion—unlike, say, appendectomy—raises a serious moral issue.

The pro-lifers whose views we have been criticizing here should be commended for highlighting the importance of doing what can be done to create a culture friendly to unborn life. But culture and law

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do not exist in two separate, hermetically sealed containers, as some seem to think. As Marvin Olasky has observed, cultural transformation and legal reform are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive. The proposition that pro-life supporters should try to change the culture and not the law is true in what it affirms and false in what it denies. The truth is that legal reform is required as a matter of both political justice and cultural transformation. The pro-life movement cannot possibly be strengthened by abandoning its core belief about the status of unborn human life.

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ON THE OTHER HAND

Trusting Laws, Trusting Others

Peter L. Berger

Much of social life is explained and justified with clichés—those little capsules of folk wisdom that suggest some fact of life is normal or even morally just. It could not be otherwise. If we had to figure out from scratch what each situation in our life means, we would all go crazy. The fully reflected-upon life may be a philosopher's ideal; for most of us it would be a prescription for madness. The effectiveness of a cliché generally depends on its *not* being reflected upon: some clichés may survive reflection—some folk wisdom is truly wise—but many clichés crumble as soon as one starts to think about them.

The clichés that proliferate in public life tend to legitimate existing political arrangements. A frequently reiterated cliché in Western democracies, particularly in the United States, is the statement that ours is "the rule of laws and not of men." Commonly uttered with pride, the statement implies that we have a morally superior arrangement for the ordering of common life. Our sense of moral superiority is expressed not only in talk about domestic affairs, but also in discussions of foreign policy where it is supposed to define a moral mandate to spread the rule of law (by persuasion or more robust means) to benighted regions where it does not as yet prevail.

This "rule of law" cliché, however, does not withstand reflection very well. Even a moment's thought leads to the recognition that there are some very bad laws, even in democratic countries, and that good men will be moved to disobey these laws if they are unable to change them. There will be the further observation that, as a general rule, laws will be good if they are made by good men. But matters become even more complicated as one continues to reflect.

Law, at least as it has developed in Western civilization, is abstract and impersonal. It seeks to avoid both the irritating complexity of concrete circumstances and the personal prejudices of those charged with the administration of justice. An alternative conception of law, far more common than ours in human cultures, is to trust in men (perhaps not in all men, but in those charged with being judges) and their capacity for moral discernment. In our legal system, typically the first question asked of any potential juror is whether he knows any of the defendants or litigants; a positive answer disqualifies the juror, just as the judge must recuse himself if he knows any of the disputing parties. An episode from British colonial history illustrates this dichotomy. Wherever possible, British colonial authorities continued to utilize indigenous law for the routine administration of justice. In Africa this generally meant that traditional chiefs continued to sit as judges in most civil cases. Usually, of course, they knew the litigants very well. In one African country (if memory serves, it was Nigeria), the British found that it was too expensive to pay every little chief for serving as judge in his tribal village; they chose some chiefs to travel over a wider territory and dispense justice beyond their traditional jurisdiction. One such chief, upon being given this assignment, exclaimed in dismay: "How can I judge these people? I do not know them."

Formal law, as we know it, is the inevitable result of a decline in trust. One is tempted to say that it could not be otherwise in a complex modern society, but this too is open to doubt. Highly complex modern societies in East Asia function very well with much less formal law than we regard as indispensable. Japan, arguably the most modern society in the world, gets along with a breathtaking scarcity of law courts and lawyers. Overseas Chinese business culture, one of the most effective in the contemporary global economy, abhors contracts and relies on the word of trusted partners. Even in the United States the diamond trade, which involves many millions of dollars, operates on the basis of handshakes. Nonetheless, in Western countries and especially in the United States, it is very difficult to imagine a situation in which an expansion of trust could lead to a shrinkage of law—which is a far cry from the cliché's implication of moral progress.

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We have not only the rule of law but its ongoing expansion. In one area of life after another, this expansion marks a victory of procedure over moral judgment. Formal law expands as legislatures continue to grind out statutes and the courts pronounce more or less imaginative interpretations of these statutes. One may recall Mark Twain's comment that no man's property or liberty is safe while the legislature is sitting. The United States is the most litigation-prone society on earth. Lawyers proliferate and become participants in more and more transactions between individuals, despite their well-known unpopularity (witness all those lawyer jokes). But law-like procedures have expanded far beyond the official legal system. Every self-respecting profession must have its so-called code of ethics. Since no one knows any longer what, say, a physician should morally do, his professional association obligingly fills the gap by providing a code of behavior.

"Ethics" here is a procedural substitute for moral judgment: Follow the procedure, and no one will be able to blame you (or—not so incidentally—be encouraged to sue you). "Medical ethics," "business ethics," "military ethics," and, for all I know, the "ethics" of podiatrists and temporary typists all supply procedural manuals that serve in the absence of moral convictions. (This is not a wild flight of fancy. The other day, in my university, I overheard a full-time secretary reproaching a part-time receptionist for "unprofessional conduct.")

In the course of my own career in the academic world, procedures have multiplied astronomically. The reason for this is, quite simply, that no one is trusted any more to make an intelligent judgment (let alone a moral one) in cases of hiring, promotion, tenure, or even in grading an undergraduate examination. Decisions on promotion and tenure are routinely based on such procedural criteria as number of publications in peer-reviewed journals and scores of approval in student evaluations (and never mind that the reviewing "peers" are typically closed cliques of ideological or methodological sectarians, and that the evaluating students are barely one step beyond illiteracy). A great achievement of the feminist movement has been to introduce contractual thinking into the heart of private life, between lovers and spouses, parents and children.

Some of these excesses may yet be rolled back. Some particularly surreal laws may be revoked. Some lawyers may have to look for more productive employment and some professors may regain a measure of confidence. On the whole, however, we will have to resign ourselves to the rule of law. But let's not pretend that this is moral progress.

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On Lesser Loyalties. It is disturbing that young Christians should think it important to invent a "Christian" reason for abstaining from murder other than the age-old and universal respect for the sanctity of human life. Other young theologians think it would solve our problems if only Christians would insist that "loyalty to Christ is superior to all other loyalties." This simple solution does not take the conflict between lower loyalties into account, nor the long history of fanaticism derived from dressing lower loyalties in the garment of Christ. Clearly we are not modest enough either to bear our distinctive witness to the generation or to avoid the peculiar vices of even the best religion when it enters the political world.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Crisis*, July 1959

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When Rights Are Wrong

William J. Stuntz

It is common in some circles to say that our legal system worries too much about rights and not enough about responsibilities. The complaint is a fair one, as far as it goes. But the real problem with rights—and with what Mary Ann Glendon calls "rights talk," a kind of talk that dominates much of our law and much of our politics—is not that we have too many or too much of them. The problem is that we have the wrong kind. In this century the *type* of rights our law protects has changed, and as it changed, our *idea* of rights changed as well. These changes affect much more than law and lawyers; they transform the way all of us, on the right or left, think about governance and citizenship.

The changes are not entirely bad (far from it), but they have had some very bad effects. Among other things, they have given moralism—the belief that law and public policy ought to embody moral standards, along with the belief that those standards are something other than made-up and culturally contingent—a bad name. And they have made this changed vision of rights so pervasive that even moralists tend to go along with it.

I

Begin with some very basic history. For most of our nation's past, rights started with property rights. They certainly did not *end* with property rights—since 1791, our Constitution has protected speech, religious practice, and much else—but property was the starting point, the core. Everything else was periphery. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a well-developed, extensive body of constitutional law protecting private property from government regulation, while the law of free speech was, by comparison, vanishingly small. The same pattern held in the world of theory. Enormous amounts of intellectual energy were spent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the scope and definition of property rights, while the literature on freedom of speech or religion was quite thin. (The huge free speech literature that exists today is almost entirely the product of this century, and mostly of the past three decades.) In the world of rights, property was king.

We do not take property rights so seriously anymore, perhaps with good reason, and thus we have trouble seeing rights the way that Madison's or Lincoln's generations saw them. That is too bad, for their thinking was both different from and in many ways healthier than our own. One part of the difference emerges clearly when one thinks about what property rights did—and did not—mean in the days when the legal system paid a great deal of attention to them.

Suppose I raise pigs, you raise corn, and we are neighbors. What do my property rights consist of? The answer is two-fold. First, the government cannot take my pigs or my land without paying me for them. Second, the government cannot tell me not to raise pigs, or how many pigs I can raise, or otherwise dictate to me how I must use my resources. Now suppose my pigs escape the rickety fences that keep them on my land, and they go on to your property and eat your corn. You sue me for damages, either on the theory that I am strictly liable for the harm my animals cause or on the ground that I was negligent in failing to build better fences. Naturally, you win. As a practical matter, I must now either build better fences or stop raising pigs, for I cannot afford to keep getting sued whenever my pigs act like pigs.

What if I were to claim that this chain of events violates my right to own pigs—my right to do with my property as I see fit? After all, they're my pigs, and it's my land, and if I don't want to build strong fences I shouldn't have to. The obvious answer to this claim, and the common law's traditional answer, is that I

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may have a right to own property, but I still have the responsibility to take others' interests into account when I use it. Indeed, in this example the rhetoric of rights cuts exactly the other way: if my pigs eat your corn, property rights should not protect *me*, they should protect *you*.

Now consider the relationship between property rights and obligations. My having a right to own pigs and land does not allow me to claim that it is nobody else's business whether I keep my pigs behind strong fences. It *is* your business, because my pigs might destroy your corn. It is the law's business as well, because the law must resolve conflicts between neighbors. It follows that I am not the sole judge of whether or not I am using my property responsibly. My right to property does not let me do whatever I want with it; it is much more limited than that. It only means that the government cannot take it away, and that no bureaucrat can tell me how many pigs I am allowed to raise. Property rights are not freestanding, and never were. On the contrary, they have always existed within an intricate web of common law obligations. Recklessness or selfishness, inattention to the needs and interests of others, often risked legal liability. And nothing in the idea of property rights foreclosed that liability.

One can easily overstate the point. If I squandered my pigs in bad deals, thereby impoverishing my family, or if I treated the pigs cruelly, or if I kept my land in such a state of disrepair that it lowered neighbors' property values—if I did any of these things, the law did little about it. Property rights left a lot of room for selfish and irresponsible behavior. But while one ought to acknowledge the scope of the right, it is vital to see its limits as well. Irresponsible use of one's property often—obviously not always, but often—risked tangible injury to others. And the common law tended to impose obligations whenever risks of that sort were present. Even in a legal world that gave property rights broad protection, the common law of tort and contract forced property owners to adhere to some serious standards of moral conduct in the use of what was theirs.

This point seems simple, but it is both terribly important and—judging from what courts and academics write about our law—largely forgotten. The rhetoric of the men who wrote and ratified the Constitution sounds odd to ears trained in late-twentieth-century law schools. Those men talked a lot about rights, yet they also talked a lot about morals and virtue and obligation. The two strands do not fit comfortably today, but they fit perfectly well in 1791, or 1891 for that matter. Rights did not mean the freedom to be one's own judge, to define the standard of responsible or proper behavior for oneself. Standards of behavior were real, and the common law usually embodied them. Rights did not trump those common law standards. Rather, rights ensured that there was something the government—usually meaning not courts, but the legislature and the executive—could not take away from you or could not make you do. The focus was on limiting some particularly dangerous kind of government power, not on maximizing individuals' freedom of choice. Government was limited, but people had to behave responsibly.

Thinking about rights this way explains a good deal of otherwise puzzling constitutional history. Let me offer just one example. The First Amendment protects "the freedom of speech." Today, we would say that if that bars anything, it bars sedition laws—criminal punishment for harsh or vicious criticism of the authorities. That seems not to have been the common view in the early 1790s. Leonard Levy and other historians of the period have argued that the generation that wrote and ratified the First Amendment sought to bar such "prior restraints" as, for example, licensing systems that required the government's permission to print a newspaper. But that same generation was a good deal less bothered by jury trials for defamation or even for sedition. (The experience of the 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts may have changed a lot of minds on this score.) They saw the government power to license speech as dangerous, because the government might refuse to license critics. But speakers still had to be responsible; they were not supposed to define their own standard of conduct. If their speech was too scurrilous, juries in defamation suits or seditious libel cases could respond accordingly. Rights and responsibilities were not in conflict. On the contrary, the two traveled together.

II

Two dramatic changes in the nature of legal rights took place in the first half or so of this century. The idea of strong, constitutionally protected property rights declined sharply; the Great Depression made such rights seem selfish or even socially dangerous. The government still cannot take my property away from me without paying for it, but the government *can* dictate my use of it in a host of ways. Constitutionally speaking, property rights may not be dead, but they are at least on some kind of life support.

As one paradigmatic right declined, another took its place. Freedom of speech grew stronger and stronger, both in legal doctrine and in legal theory. Beginning with the prosecution of anarchists and other antiwar protesters during World War I, the courts heard a host of cases challenging the government's ability to forbid political protest. Increasingly, the courts took the side of the protesters. This trend accelerated greatly in the years following Senator McCarthy's investigations of Communist activities. The First Amendment ceased to be a constitu-

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tional backwater and became instead the starting point for thinking about rights. By 1960, property was plainly no longer the place where theorizing about rights began. Speech was.

In many ways, both changes were for the better. Strong constitutional property rights would have disabled modern-day safety, health, and environmental regulation—regulation that even today's congressional Republicans are mostly inclined to leave alone. And a more vigorous First Amendment made possible both the labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. These are great gains, and hardly anyone wants to undo them.

Yet these changes, or rather the change in thinking they signaled, had serious intellectual consequences, arising almost by accident from the nature of most free speech disputes. When the American Nazi Party in 1977 announced its plan to march in Skokie, Illinois, home to a large number of Holocaust survivors, the marchers created no serious risk of tangible harm. The planned speech in this famous case was evil and sure to cause great pain, but the pain was not of a sort that traditionally gives rise to lawsuits: the common law has always been loath to grant relief for hurt feelings, even when the hurt is quite real. If the Nazis—with their uniforms and their flags, conveying their evil message in a place designed to cause as much pain as possible—had a right to march in Skokie, then the march was, legally speaking, nobody else's business. Because of the nature of the activity, there is no web of common law obligations to define a standard of moral, responsible behavior. The only possible source of such a standard is direct regulation by the government. The free speech claim, if it wins—as it did for the Nazis—preempts that regulation. Here, rights trump obligations. As far as the law is concerned, the Nazis get to define for themselves where the bounds of propriety lie.

This point applies to most of the settings where free speech claims arise, because selfish or irresponsible speech tends not to be the direct cause of tangible injury, and the common law tends only to protect against tangible injury. (Defamation is an exception, for there the common law has long allowed damages for the intangible harm that falsehoods cause one's reputation. Interestingly, the courts have greatly narrowed the traditional law of defamation, making it much harder for plaintiffs to recover than it was before the 1960s. And this narrowing has been done in the name of the First Amendment—in the name of the right of free speech.) If I buy or sell pornographic magazines I harm no one, at least not as the common law usually defines harm. As with the Nazis in Skokie, common law obligations do not exist, so the only legal force regulating my conduct is direct government censorship. If my right to buy or sell or read or publish trumps censorship, then I am subject to no standard at all. Or, to be more precise, I am subject to whatever standard I choose. Like the Nazis in Skokie, I am my own judge.

So while property-rights claims tended to disable *some kinds* of legal regulation, free speech claims often disable the *only possible kind* of legal regulation. That is why strong property rights could exist alongside a strong vision of law as a source of moral standards, while strong free speech rights tend to imply no standards at all: where the right applies, the right-holder's standards are the only ones that count.

Consider what all this means for the concept of rights. For the pig farmer, rights meant limits on the power of government bureaucrats to order him around or to seize his pigs. For the Nazis in Skokie or buyers and sellers of pornography, rights mean something quite different: the claim of right is a way of saying "it's none of your business" to all who might complain about their conduct. To put it more positively, rights mean the freedom to choose, without having to worry about what anyone else thinks. The idea is not to limit the potential for government oppression—that was the older version of rights, the one associated with property. Rather, the idea is to empower the individual, to maximize the ability to act on preferences, to expand the scope of that idol of our culture: choice.

III

Today, rights are indeed pro-choice—not coincidentally, the label seized on by proponents of the most famous, and infamous, constitutional right of our times. In Madison's or Lincoln's day, it would have sounded like nonsense to suggest that the government is acting oppressively when it forbids some kind of behavior simply because, in the view of the majority of its citizens, the behavior is evil. Madison's and Lincoln's America was home to lots of morals laws, forbidding lots of what we would now call private behavior. People may or may not have thought they were a good idea, but few thought those laws violated anyone's rights. The concept of rights simply did not intersect laws forbidding abortion, or wrongful but consensual sex. Today, rights are about choice, and anything that restricts choice is subject to attack. And choice, in turn, is at war with standards and obligations.

This dynamic is most obviously at work in the abortion debate. But it does not stop there. It is also at the heart of the debate about two other rights claims pressing hard at the legal system today. When Justice Blackmun argued in *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986) for the right to have sex with the consenting adult of one's choice, he emphasized the lack of any serious state interest in regulation. The only possible interest, he argued, was moral. To Blackmun, *that* interest was worse than trivial—it was illegitimate, for it consisted of some people trying to impose their values on others. The same idea arises in the contemporary

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claim for a right of suicide. Those who argue for a right to choose the time and manner of death argue that a given patient's choice is nobody else's business, that anyone who says otherwise is being intolerant. Of course in the modern conception of rights moralism *is* intolerant, even bigoted. (It is no accident that Blackmun compared the state's moral interest to the interest of racial bigots in discriminating against blacks.) After all, the thinking goes, only bigotry—only nastiness—could explain why you might want to forbid something I want to do when I'm not hurting you in any tangible way. In a world where choice is king, moralists are mean-spirited busybodies.

The right to abortion, the right to doctor-assisted suicide, and the right to sexual options all flow naturally from an argument that in turn flows from the modern idea of free speech rights: it's nobody else's business what I say or do, as long as I hurt no one else. And "hurt" is defined fairly narrowly: tangible injuries count, but offense does not. Any desire to place limits on behaviors of this sort is automatically deemed intolerant and hence outside the range of polite discourse.That posture rules out most socially healthy compromises, arrangements that both allow society to act on its moral preferences and also allow those who disagree to act on their disagreement. Declaring moralism out of bounds, which is what the contemporary concept of rights largely does, not only eliminates arguments for criminal sodomy laws. (Those arguments are weak in any event, if only because it is dangerous to have criminal laws that are sure to go unenforced.) It also eliminates arguments for traditional restrictions on marriage and adoption—indeed, for anything that expresses a social preference for one kind of family structure rather than another. We have not reached that point yet, but that is where we are headed. Rights used to flow out of the thoroughly Christian view that those who govern are, like those they govern, fallen people prone to evil and in need of restraint. Today, the worst evil of all is intolerance, and restraint is a bad thing.

None of this is an argument against rights, but it may be an argument against the way we are accustomed to thinking of them. There are special dangers when the government coerces its citizens, dangers of arbitrariness and discrimination and hidden agendas. And there are good reasons to limit government power solely in order to limit government power—too much concentrated authority is a bad thing, given that power is always wielded by sinful hands. But such concerns—focusing on the need to limit power rather than the need to protect choice—lead to a very different kind of society than the kind that embraces rights in their late-twentieth-century guise. One vision is of a society that cares about and argues about morals, but with a sense of humility and restraint. The other vision is of a society of egoists, each a god unto himself, where all standards come from within.

Today, even serious Christians often embrace this second vision. Indeed, politically active Christians have not so much challenged this basic picture of rights as they have turned it into a weapon in their own short-term battles. Consider two debates drawn from college campuses today. The first concerns speech codes. Generally, forces on the political and cultural left have promulgated these codes, which have worked to restrict both speech that is personally insulting and rude and speech that is hostile to some of the left's causes (especially affirmative action and gay rights). The desire to squelch disagreement on politically contentious topics is a bad thing. But the overall enterprise seems to me promising. Surely there is something worth celebrating in the idea that universities should enforce some minimal level of civility and decency. Indeed, I would have thought my fellow Christians would like that idea, that our complaints would be about what civility and decency ought to *mean* in this setting, about what limits universities should and should not impose. But I regularly hear and read Christians argue that the whole idea of these speech codes, the whole idea of punishing offensive speech, is wrong and intolerant. The debate about speech codes has turned into the usual rights debate—the intolerant oppressors (this time on the left) who would impose their values on the rest of us, versus our right to choose and define for ourselves what is good or bad. Moralists too often wind up arguing not for the right kind of standards, but for no standards at all.

My second example is closer to home. I teach at the University of Virginia, source of the *Rosenberger* case, last year's Supreme Court decision about freedom of religion. (I should disclose that I have personal ties on both sides of that case: I serve on the board of an organization that gave some money to the students who sued the university, and the lawyer who argued for the university in the Supreme Court is a close friend.) The case began when some Christian students, publishing a newspaper about campus life from a Christian point of view, applied for university funds collected from a mandatory student activities fee and doled out by a student committee. The application was denied, on the ground that university policy forbade the award of funds for religious or political activity. This did not keep the students from publishing their newspaper, or from using university space to do it; the sole issue was whether they would have access to some of the loot in the student activities fund. The Christian students sued, claiming the university's refusal to give them money violated their freedom of speech and infringed their right to the free exercise of religion. After losing in the lower courts, the students won in the Supreme Court, to much celebration in Christian circles.

The celebration is misguided: if the celebrants

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understood the winning claim in *Rosenberger* they would (or should) be appalled. The students argued in effect that when it comes to subsidizing speech, universities are not allowed to have standards. Any decision that some kinds of speech are educationally worthwhile and others are not—even if the decision is made only for the purpose of giving out money—violates the rights of the disfavored group. If the University of Virginia, through its students, gives money to the yearbook and the secular campus newspaper, it must give money to a Christian yearbook or newspaper as well. The logic, of course, has nothing to do with the students' newspaper being Christian. The Supreme Court's decision would protect the Students for Satan just as much, if there were such a group. Come to think of it, maybe there will be, now that money is available.

Indeed, if one takes seriously the argument the Court adopted in *Rosenberger*, then those who applaud the decision have some very strange bedfellows. A number of Christian groups have argued that the National Endowment for the Arts should not be funding art that is sexually explicit or offensive, even if the art is not legally obscene. (Of course, it would be enough if the NEA would just stop funding *bad* art, but that seems too much to hope for.) But if the Court's logic in *Rosenberger* is taken seriously, the NEA *must* fund offensive art if it funds anything at all. Subsidizing some kinds of expression but not others would be taking sides. And taking sides means imposing standards, limiting the freedom of choice of those whose desire for a handout went unfulfilled.

In other words, the students in *Rosenberger* stood on precisely the same ground as the artists who cry censorship at any attempt to impose some limits on what the NEA can spend tax dollars on. The Christian students' rights claim won. But the claim won by seizing on a view of law and government that enshrines moral neutrality and freedom of choice as the highest of all goods. That is what happens when moralists use rights as a weapon. The moralists sometimes win, but moralism always seems to lose.

IV

The real shame of debates like these is the missed opportunity. The issue worth arguing about in the debate about campus speech codes is how to create the conditions of civil, decent, respectful discussion. Christians ought to have something to contribute to an argument like that. The issue worth arguing about in *Rosenberger* is what kinds of student activities universities should and should not be encouraging. Again, Christians should have something to say about that. Even if we don't win the arguments—and let's be clear, lots of times we won't—we can at least move the culture in the right direction. But late-twentieth-century America turns issues like these into rights claims—a game that everyone, right and left, believer and agnostic, plays. The result is a terrible dynamic in our law, and to some degree in our politics as well: the none-of-your-business sphere of life, the sphere where no standards are permitted, grows ever larger. Yesterday abortion, today doctor-assisted suicide, tomorrow . . . who knows? And as rights grow stronger, standards—right and wrong—grow weaker.

To be sure, the signs are not all bad. Some aspects of our contemporary politics are encouraging. Two generations ago there was much talk about the rights of white people to discriminate against blacks. That talk has disappeared; when it comes to race we are now a society of moralists. Two decades ago lots of people talked about welfare policy in terms of rights, as though it was none of our business how recipients of government aid might use it. Now hardly anyone talks that way; the debate is about what a fair society should do for its poor and how to do it in a way that reinforces (not undermines) society's standards. Not too long ago courts and academics talked about divorce in rights terms, as though all that mattered were the short-term preferences of the spouses. Today the focus is at least occasionally on divorce's social consequences, especially its consequences for children. *Moral* consequences are still outside the conventional debate, but the direction is nevertheless promising.

For moralists—people who believe that moral standards ought to be embodied in law and discussed in public policy debates—that is the only direction worth traveling. And rights as they are now conceived have a powerful tendency to get in the way. Indeed, we might do well to abandon talk about "rights" altogether. Say "limits" instead. That puts the emphasis where it belongs: on the need to place bounds on the fallen men and women who exercise political power. Even better, it takes the emphasis away from where it very much does *not* belong: on our desire to define our own standards, to maximize our range of free choice.

I would never suggest that we undo all of the expansion of free speech rights we have seen in this century (though I'd happily undo some). Nor would I go back to the kind of property rights our legal system had a century ago. But as a society, we could do worse than to return to a way of thinking about law and government and morals that prevailed several generations ago. Our society has had quite enough arguing about the virtues of choice. We could stand a good deal more thinking and arguing about which choices are virtuous—and which ones are not. FT

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Farmers, Founders, and Fratricide:

The Story of Cain and Abel

Leon R. Kass

Once one gets right down to it, the difference between liberals and conservatives traces home to a disagreement about the basic source of human troubles.

Liberals are inclined to blame external causes—for example, poverty, prejudice, poor rearing, or just plain misfortune—against which they take up arms in order progressively to enable man's natural goodness and felicity to emerge out from under; for liberals, it is the scientists, inventors, and caregivers who are the truest benefactors of the race, helping to overcome necessity and to extend human dominion over an inhospitable world.

Conservatives are inclined to blame human misery rather on causes lurking naturally within the souls of men—pride, vanity, jealousy, greed, and insatiable or unruly desires. Accordingly, conservatives are skeptical about human perfectibility and suspicious of utopian projects, not least because they would have to be conducted by imperfect fellow human beings, always dangerously unfit to remake the world; for conservatives, it is the priests, prophets, and lawgivers who are the truest benefactors of the race, helping to restrain vice and to encourage human self-command in the ceaseless struggle raging in the human soul between our better and worse natures.

Curiously, liberals and conservatives both find intellectual and moral support in the same traditional sources. For example, the prophetic and messianic strands of biblical religion inspire many a liberal activist to build a world in which men will turn swords into plowshares; and the early intellectual founders of modernity—like Bacon and Locke—took God's primary exhortation in Genesis, "to have dominion," as a religious warrant for the technological project to master nature. Yet neighboring passages of Genesis are said by conservatives to show man's radical sinfulness, and the weight of Scripture is usually regarded as falling on the side of lawgivers and priests, not scientists and inventors. The truth that the Bible says shall make us free is surely not the knowledge of the laws of Newton.

What does the Bible actually teach about the source of human troubles? What is its author's view of civilization and the arts, or of the prospects for overcoming hostility and misery among men? Though the Bible's first word cannot be its last word, one would do well to begin near the beginning, in the book of Genesis. The first exploration of this subject comes with the story of Cain and Abel.

The story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) is, in fact, not a separate tale but, rather, a continuation and conclusion of the story of the Garden of Eden. It completes the story of Adam and Eve (begun in Genesis 2:4), of whom we shall not hear again. More important, by presenting an account of primordial life outside the Garden—the life of human beings born of woman, living without imposed law but instead under the newly obtained "natural" knowledge of good and bad—it shows us what natural or unregulated human life might be like.

This final episode of the primordial story features fundamental elements of human existence, psychic and social: (a) the first household and family, that is, the first human institution, and therewith the first element of society; (b) the first attempts, through sacrifices, at a relationship between man and God; (c) distinctive human passions, preeminently wounded pride, anger, jealousy, and fear; (d) violent death, crime and punishment, and the rudiments of (natural) justice; and (e) the emergence of agriculture and settlements, the arts and the city. As a result, this tale manages to introduce, in a mere twenty-six verses,

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many of the essential elements of a "natural" anthropology, showing us to ourselves in a mirror and making vivid how humankind would live on its own without moral instruction. More anthropological than historical—these are *paradigmatic* more than they are "real" people—the story helps us see clearly some of the reasons why the "natural" or uninstructed way does not work, and, therefore, why the giving of God's law might be both necessary and welcome.

Everyone knows that Cain committed fratricide. But few people remember that he is also the first farmer, the initiator of sacrifices, and the founder of the first city, as well as the progenitor of a line of men that invented the arts—including music and metallurgy. Why does the first family issue in fratricide? And what has fratricide to do with the city or with all these other—and usually celebrated—features of civilized life? Is there, perhaps, something questionable, even destructive, at the heart of civilization? The text that prompts these questions does not simply answer them. To pursue them we must submit to the careful work of exegesis and interpretation—setting aside, as much as we are able, our preexisting prejudices.

> And the man knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten [or "created": *kanithi*] a man [*ish*] with the Lord." And she again bore his brother Abel.

The first word about life outside the Garden is not as harsh as we had been led to believe. On the contrary, it celebrates the birth of a son, without report of (the predicted) pain or trouble to the woman, received joyously by his mother. Adam, having known his wife, recedes into the background; Eve, in her generational fullness, occupies center stage, to her great delight. Boasting of her own creative powers, Eve compares herself as creator to God: though the conventional translation of *kanithi ish eth adonai*, "I have gotten a man *with the help of* the Lord," makes Eve seem grateful and even pious, "with the help of" is an interpretive interpolation. In my view, the context clearly favors "I have gotten [or "created"] a man [*equally*] with God"—or, in plain speech, "God created a man, and now so have I."

Who could blame Eve for such an attitude? Absent some divine revelation about God's role in generation, all the evidence naturally supports Eve's view: she conceived, she labored, and she bore; and the child grew and emerged out of her own substance. Having been named Eve (*Chavah*) by her husband because she was to be the mother of all living (*chai*), she now exults in her special creative powers. She takes special delight in her firstborn.

Cain, the pride of his mother's bearing, bears the name of his mother's pride: Cain (*Kayin*), related to *kanithi*, from a root *kanah*, meaning to possess; also perhaps related to *koneh*, meaning to form or shape or make or create. Cain, a formed being, a being created and possessed by his mother, will become a proud farmer, the sort of man who lays possessive claim to the earth and who is proud of his ability to bring forth—to create—fruit from the ground. Cain, the firstborn, is sitting pretty.

In contrast, the birth of Abel, the younger, is uncelebrated by his mother. Though no explanation is given for his name (unlike for Cain's), he is, prophetically, given a name that means "breath-that-vanishes." Abel, introduced only as "his brother Abel," seems to be an afterthought. There is no described relation to his mother; instead he is important only or mainly as Cain's brother.

Were we to know nothing more of the two brothers, we would still have enough with which to think about their relationship. Even apart from differences in inborn nature or those resulting from parental favoritism or neglect, birth order alone sets the stage. Younger siblings face difficulties because they come on the scene with their older brothers (or sisters) firmly established—in size, in ability, and in their parents' affections. The younger, regarded as underdog, elicits our sympathy. But the eldest, too, faces serious and more subtle difficulties. The object of parental pride, he feels that more is expected of him—and, more often than not, it is. More than his younger siblings, he bears the burden of a need to please; his failures he knows will disappoint.

Moreover, the birth of his siblings makes a radical change in the world as he has known it. Previously the sole apple of each parent's eye, now he has competition—especially for his mother's attention. Why, he must silently ask himself, did they have another one, unless there were something wrong with me, something they are keeping hidden? Because anger at his parents for his displacement is dangerous and counterproductive, the firstborn lodges all his resentment with the innocent newcomer. (As one firstborn nakedly put it when baby sibling was but a few days old: "Mom, why don't we flush her down the toilet before she gets too big?") The more beloved and favored and happy the firstborn, the more difficult it may be for him to accept the second, and the more important it will be for him to prove himself superior. These rivalries can be further accentuated by differences in habits and ways of life, as, indeed, they are in our present story.

> Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain was a tiller of the ground.

The two occupations of the brothers echo two earlier remarks about human work. Herding sheep reminds us of having dominion—ruling—over the animals, the work announced in Genesis 1:26, 28, the majestic story in which man is godlike, the world harmonious, and all is seen to be very good. Tilling the earth is the way anticipated and forecast in the so-called second creation story (Genesis 2:5, 3:23), the

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story that shows how badness and hardship enter and complicate human existence. Cain, the new man and heir of the second account, appears to be following the life God foretold for man outside the Garden (like many a firstborn, he takes over "the family business"); in this sense, one might think Cain "obedient." But, as Robert Sacks observes,

> The only disturbing thing is his name. It implies that, for Cain, to be a farmer means to put up fences and to establish a private tract of land which one can call one's own, rather than fulfilling one's duty to the fruitfulness of the earth. Abel's way of life leaves the world open. Shepherds need no fences and roam through the whole.

But the difference is greater still.

Farming requires intellectual sophistication and psychic discipline: wit is necessary to foresee the possibility of bread from grain, to develop tools, to protect crops; self-control—indeed, a massive change in the psychodynamics of need and satisfaction—is needed before anyone will work today so that he might eat months later. Agriculture goes with possession of land and settled habitation; it represents a giant step toward human self-sufficiency, yet it is also precarious and very dependent on rain. Because he mixes his labor with the earth, the farmer claims possession not only of the crops but also of the land itself. For the same reason, he is even inclined to regard himself as responsible—creatively as maker—for the produce itself. The farmer is an audacious and self-assertive character.

The shepherd, in contrast, lives a simple and by and large artless life. His work is mild and gentle; his rule requires no violence. The sheep graze as they roam and produce wool and milk out of their own substance, the shepherd contributing nothing but also harming nothing. Though he wanders the earth as he pleases, the shepherd has no illusions of self-sufficiency; indeed, he is likely to feel acutely the dependence of his entire life on power not under his control and processes not of his own creation.

In sum, Cain's way of life, like the man himself, is more complex: possessive, artful, potentially harmful, and dangerous, but with the prospect of the higher achievements (and risks) of civilization. Abel's way, like the man, is simple: open and permissive, harmless, and certainly vulnerable (especially before craft, cunning, and technique) and, besides, incapable of accomplishing much of anything. Abel's way is fragile, not to say impossible; Cain's way is problematic, not to say indecent—unless it can be educated and restrained. Everything depends on whether the possession and the use of the land are just and whether Cain's pride can be tamed by remembering that not he but God—a power beyond—is the source of his farmerly success. The immediate sequel faces this question frontally.

> In the course of time [*miketz yamim*: literally, "at the end of days"] it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord, and Abel, too, brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.

Sacrifice is of human origins. God neither commands nor requests it; we have no reason to believe that He even welcomes it. On the contrary, we have reason to suspect—and will soon give ample evidence to defend this suspicion—that the human impulse to sacrifice is, to say the least, highly problematic, especially from God's point of view. To be sure, God will eventually command sacrifices, though then only under the strictest rules. As in so many other matters, the problematic is permitted but only if regulated. Because He will not, or cannot, extirpate the dangerous impulses in men, God makes concessions to them, while, at the same time, containing them under explicit and precise commandments. The present story, which begins the reader's education regarding the questionable nature of sacrifices, should arouse our suspicion because it is Cain who is their inventor and founder.

Competing yet deep-seated passions lie beneath the human impulse to give a share or to pay tribute to the divine, to offer gifts and oblations to God or gods. To begin with, there are fear and gratitude—fear that, unless appeased with presents, the powers that be will thwart or ignore our hopes and wreck our plans; gratitude for experienced good results and good fortune, interpreted as divine favor directed at us. Less "rational" are "the ecstatic passions," associated with bloody and orgiastic sacrifice (in Greece, the province of Dionysus); these appear to play no part in the present offering, but they will figure in Noah's sacrifice after the flood and in many later and equally questionable biblical sacrifices.

The impulse to sacrifice need not be at all impulsive. It is frequently a matter of rational calculation, not to say cunning manipulation. Man may seek to put the gods in his debt, or, more markedly, to bribe them into delivering benefits and withholding harms. Any human being, conscious of being at the mercy of powers not under his command, will attempt to do something to improve, or avoid, his fate. For primitive man, in the wide open spaces—and especially for farmers, eager for rain—the powers of concern were the powers aloft, including the sun and the moon, the wind and the rain. It is perfectly fitting that the primordial farmer be the first to think of sacrifice—even before he knows anything at all about who the gods really are.

Indeed, ignorance of the divine—and the wish to dispel that ignorance—is itself another powerful motive for bringing sacrifice. Men intuit the presence of higher powers, perhaps first through the

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experience of awe and wonder before the spectacles and phenomena of nature: sunrise and sunset, new and full moons, thunder and lightning, and the fall of water out of the sky. Natural piety gives rise to the desire to close the gap between the human and the divine, to mediate the distance, to establish ties, to gain a close and firm connection to the whole and its ruling forces. This, too, is an appropriate enough desire for the first truly human earthlings.

But it is no simple matter to act on this desire. For how can and ought one communicate with what is so remote, unknown, or inscrutable? Unless man knows who God is and what (if anything) He wants, communicating will be strictly a shot in the dark. Curiously, however, human beings do not behave as though God were mysterious and inscrutable. On the contrary, both the fact of offering sacrifice and the particular gift offered bespeak certain clear—and clearly presumptuous—assumptions about the divine: (1) God is (gods are) the kind of being(s) Who does (do) or could care for me; (2) He (or they) would be more likely to care for me—do me good and not evil—if I could please Him (them); (3) No doubt I could please Him (them) with gifts, for am I not pleased by gifts? (Note the unspoken premise: the gods are just like me.) (4) He (they) must like what I like (assuming the same premise of similitude).

The deep ambiguity at the heart of the human impulse to sacrifice now stands revealed: all the underlying assumptions—even in the best case, a sacrifice from pure gratitude—are in fact expressions of human pride and presumption, masquerading as true submission. Any deity worthy of the name must, no doubt, see this for what it is worth.

Cain, the initiator, addresses the divine as eater. He brings before the (to him unknown) god or gods "of the fruit of the ground," *his* produce, but produce—he must be aware—that depends on the gods' sending rain. In what spirit Cain brings his gift we cannot be sure. But the text hints at possible half-heartedness: he waited until "the end of days" to offer; and, unlike his brother Abel, who (though merely a follower) brought the *best* portions (the fat) of the *first*lings of the flock, Cain's gift was indifferent or worse. But, as we have shown, the sacrifice itself is ambiguous enough—especially when not commanded, especially when coming from a farmer like Cain.

> And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell.

The economy of the text leaves big questions unanswered. Hidden are God's reasons for respecting Abel's offer and not Cain's. Did He discern a difference in intent and disposition, along the lines hinted at above? Does God simply prefer Abel's way of life to that of Cain, a difference that might be reflected in different attitudes toward the world and the divine? We do not know. We are, it seems, meant to focus on the outer fact alone.

Looking only at what we do know, we must avoid a common misperception. As Robert Sacks has pointed out, "Cain's sacrifice was not rejected but merely not yet accepted. . . . From Cain's reaction it appears as though he understood God's disregarding his sacrifice as a simple rejection, but this is not necessarily the case." The sequel will bear this out. But we must first face Cain's anger—the first human display of this crucially human and ever-dangerous passion—and also his shame ("his countenance fell").

Both the shame and the anger have their roots in pride, wounded pride. Cain, the firstborn, the proud farmer proud of his own produce, first also in his relation to God as the "inventor" of sacrifices, desires to be first and best and to be so recognized. His younger brother, a lazy shepherd, a mere follower in gift-giving, has surpassed him in God's respect. Cain feels the sting of shame, as the world does not affirm his lofty self-image. But, still proud, he takes the loss as a slight or insult; he not only hangs his head in disgrace, he fills his heart with rage, for he believes that he has been not only harmed but injured. Though it is not pretty, Cain's anger carries the world's first (outraged) sense of (in)justice.

The intrinsic connection between anger and justice has been noted since antiquity. Aristotle calls anger "an impulse . . . to revenge . . . caused by an obvious *unjustified* slight," and calls slight "an active display of opinion about something one takes to be worthless." A man feels especially slighted—unjustly—by "those to whom he looks for good treatment: persons, that is, who are indebted to him for benefits, past or present, which they have received from him." Cain's display of anger reveals retroactively his state of soul in making the sacrifice. Because he had sought to place God in his debt by means of his gift, Cain feels slighted by what he takes to be God's unjustified rejection of his offering. If indeed part of Cain's anger is directed at the divine, it shows how presumptuous and hubristic were his expectations.

More likely, however, Cain's anger is directed mainly at his brother. God, after all, is invisible and (up to this point) silent; for all Cain truly knows of divinity, there may not even be a being capable of bestowing slights and favors. And, be this as it may, it is surely safer to displace (not necessarily by a conscious process) his anger at God onto his human rival, in whose absence God would not have found him to be merely second best. The bitterness of not having his own gift respected is nothing compared with that of seeing the greater success of his lesser brother. Cain treats Abel's success in sacrifice as if Abel had been trying to outdo him.

Rousseau has captured this essentially human (all too human) phenomenon, showing the evils that lurk

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in the otherwise reasonable and fruitful concern for self-esteem:

> Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most skillful, or the most eloquent came to be the most highly regarded, and this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity and contempt on the one hand, shame and envy on the other; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.
>
> As soon as men had begun to appreciate one another, and the idea of regard had taken shape in their mind, everyone claimed a right to it, and one could no longer with impunity fail to show it toward anyone. From this arose the first duties of civility even among savages, and from it any intentional wrong became an affront because, together with the harms resulting from the injury, the offended party saw in it contempt for his own person, often more unbearable than the harm itself. Thus everyone punishing the contempt shown him in a manner proportionate to the stock he set by himself, vengeance became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel.

Cain, not treated as he thought he deserved, smoldered with resentment at Abel, who was treated better than Cain thought he deserved, who had in fact usurped—de facto—his pride of place. No wonder he was angry.

God enters the picture in an attempt to assuage Cain's fury; indeed, He expresses (feigned?) surprise that Cain should be angry at all:

> And the Lord said unto Cain: "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shall there not be a lifting? But if you do not do well, sin shall be couching at your door; its desire shall be for you, but you shall rule over it."

Trying to comfort and encourage Cain, God makes clear that his sacrifice has not been rejected. Rather, acceptance will come provided Cain "does well." We must now try to put ourselves in Cain's place.

No doubt Cain ought to be pleased by God's attention and interest in him. (Though He respected Abel's offering, God speaks only to Cain; Cain seems to hold more interest, being both more promising and more problematic.) The promise of a lifting—of his sacrifice, of his countenance, and of his fallen dignity and standing—ought to be encouraging. Yet God's counsel is surely puzzling, not to say Delphic. Indeed, this part of God's speech is regarded as one of the most difficult passages in the entire Bible. One must not assume that Cain found it less obscure than we.

God's counsel, whatever it finally means, seems to assume that notions of "doing well" and "not doing well" are present and clear to human beings, without further instruction; for human beings do indeed have some kind of knowledge of good and bad. True, there has been no given law; there are as yet no well-defined crimes or punishments. Still, human beings act, moved by their own perceptions of better and worse. "Do well," exhorted the Lord; and even if you do not do well, and thus even if sin is in your way, ready to pounce like a wild animal, you will be able to rule over it. If God intended to warn Cain of the dangers lurking in his own heart, he might have found a clearer way to do so; and, clear or not, the overall message—"Do well; you can master the obstacles"—was not, on balance, a teaching of self-restraint. Cain, still angry, now put his mind to "doing well."

Those who wonder why God might not have produced a more powerful and successful antidote to Cain's anger might wish to consider God's speech as though it were the voice of reason and goodness—such as these might exist in "natural man"—manifesting itself (as if coming "from the outside") against a soul filled with rage. (Compare, for example, the sudden appearance of prudent Athena who prevents Achilles from drawing his sword on Agamemnon in Book I of the *Iliad*.) "Be reasonable," says the voice, "bide your time, you'll get your position back. Do well." The voice of reason is, first of all, concerned with our own good; otherwise, we will not listen. Absent specific instructions and delineations, rationality is experienced not as counseling the other fellow's good, but as promising my own—not now, but later, that is, if I "do well" and "overcome sin," which threatens to get in my way and drag me down. The sequel shows how little availing are such vague instructions in the face of vengeful passions. They might even be understood to counsel revenge—only not impulsively, but with due calculation and premeditation. Primordial human knowledge of good and bad may be used self-righteously, but it is a far cry from righteousness. This we readers quickly learn from the ensuing events.

> And Cain appointed a place where to meet Abel his brother [literally, "And said (*vayomer*) Cain to (*el*) Abel his brother"], and it happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against [*el*] Abel his brother, and killed him.

Cain uses his reason to help take his revenge. He plans the event, employs speech to arrange Abel's presence, and picks a place out in the fields where no one will see and where no one can come to Abel's

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rescue. But if reason is the instrument, jealousy remains the likely motive: the hated rival is removed. But gain might also have been on Cain's mind; with Abel out of the way, his flocks would belong to Cain, who might then be able to offer a respectable sacrifice (or who might now flourish, despite the bad harvest). And, to stretch the point perhaps beyond what is reasonable, Cain may even have thought this is precisely what was meant by "doing well." For how was he to know that murder is bad, it not having been forbidden? Because the deed was committed not in heat but with premeditation, we must assume Cain believed that he was doing good—at least for himself.

Whatever he may have thought beforehand, he soon learns, painfully, the wrongness of his deed—and so do we.

> And the Lord said unto Cain: "Where is Abel thy brother?" And he said: "I know not [*lo yodati*]; am I my brother's keeper [*hashomer achi onokhi*]?" And He said: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground."

God does not begin with an accusation or an assertion, but, like both a good teacher and a good investigator, with a question, and one that requires Cain to confront himself in his brotherliness. Your brother Abel, your young playmate, out of the same womb: Why is he not at your side? Where is he?

Cain denies knowledge of Abel's whereabouts. Though an analytic philosopher might try to argue that Cain's speech is true—for where indeed is the soul of Abel now?—Cain, to protect himself, lies to God (or, if you prefer, to his newly aroused conscience), but not to himself. Indeed, to keep the inquisitive voice from forcing him to confront fully the meaning of his deed, he answers the question with a question, no doubt tinged with indignation and even mocking: Why are you asking *me*? Am I supposed to be his guardian? *You*, you who liked his sacrifice, you who made him prosper—aren't *you* his keeper? Why don't you know where he is? And (implicitly), what kind of a guardian are *you*?

God (or "conscience") is not deceived. Taking Cain's counteroffensive to be a tacit admission of guilt, He puts the well-timed question to Cain: What have you done? Of course I know where Abel is. I have heard *your* brother's spilled blood crying out unto Me from the earth. How could you have done such a thing to your *brother*?

The enormity of his deed is now borne in on Cain, thanks to the awesome intervention of the transcendent voice. The image of the screaming blood of his brother awakens Cain's horror; a "protoreligious" dread accompanies this picture of violent death. Very likely, guilt wells up in response to the accusation implied by the screams, as does pity for his fallen brother. Even the murderer cannot but be moved. Not just the will of Abel, but the cosmos itself has been violated; the crime is a crime against "blood"—against both life and kin: the whole earth, polluted and stained with bloodshed, cries in anguish and for retribution. We anticipate precisely God's next remarks.

> "And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth."

The earth that supports life, now defiled by life's wanton destruction—watered not by rain (wished and sacrificed for) but by blood, shed by the farmer's hand—becomes an alien place for the murderer. The world is arranged so that murder will not go unnoticed; it will also not go unanswered. The earth shall resist the murderer's plow; nowhere on earth shall he find a comfortable place to settle, both because no one else will welcome him and because his conscience and his fears will give him no rest. A man who has once shed blood knows in his marrow that his own life hangs by a thread, that he lives, as it were, by the grace of God. Despite the fact that God does not exact the fitting specific (capital) punishment for his murder—as there is yet no law against it, there can be no exact punishment—Cain is nonetheless thrown into despair.

> And Cain said unto the Lord, "My punishment [or "my sin": *avoni*] is greater than I can bear. Behold, Thou has driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it shall come to pass that everyone that findeth me shall slay me."

Cain's fears lead him to exaggerate the "punishment." He understands—mistakenly—that he is banished from the whole earth, and that, in wandering, he will be out of sight of (a merely local god's?) divine protection, exposed to predators not unlike himself, men who will kill him for gain or for sport. Cain, the farmer, the man who sought security in settlement and possession of a portion of the earth, feels utterly bereft at the prospect of wandering—of living an open life such as that of his brother Abel. Believing that God defends only those who are settled and established—after all, God was apparently not able to protect Abel out in the fields—Cain fears for his life once he is forced to roam about among uncivilized men.

God addresses Cain's fear of violent death:

> And the Lord said unto him, "Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a

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> mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should slay him.

The mark of Cain—wrongly regarded as the sign of murderous guilt—is, in fact, meant to protect Cain's life in the wilderness, and to obviate the need for settled defense. Reassured but only temporarily, Cain sets out on his travels.

> And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Heading backward toward the Garden, longing perhaps for its safety and comfort, Cain comes to the land of Nod—literally, the land of "wandering"—and *settles* there. Though he is in the place of wanderers, Cain refuses to wander. He lacks trust—in nature, in God, and in his fellow human beings. He would rather rely on his wits and his own flesh and blood to sustain and defend him. These he trusts because these he knows.

> And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived, and bore Enoch; and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch.

Having broken his ties to his origins, now alone, vulnerable, and without refuge, Cain deals with his predicament by looking to the future. Aware of the prospect of violent death, he takes out insurance. Knowing his wife, Cain fathers a son, whom he names Enoch, meaning "to initiate or discipline, to dedicate or train up." Cain initiates a family to which he will dedicate himself, and which he will discipline and train up in the ways of dedication. Unlike the later (and precociously modern) builders of the city of Babel, who seek a name for themselves here and now, the city Cain builds is dedicated to the name of his son. The city is almost certainly founded on the fear of death and with a view to safety.

The Hebrew word for city, *iyr*, comes from a root meaning "to watch" and "to wake." In the first instance, a city is a place guarded by a wakeful watch; it is not the market or the shrine but the watchtower or outpost that first makes a city a city. Though Cain retains his pride (in his son), his confidence has been tempered by fear. But civilization as it comes into being starting from his founding act is tainted: the city is founded in fear of violent death, but first, in fratricide. This taint, one must believe, is, from the Bible's point of view, inherent in civilization as such. We follow its emergence in the hope of learning why and how it may be defective.

> And unto Enoch was born Irad ["fugitive"]; and Irad begot Mehujael ["smitten of God" or "seer of God"]; and Mehujael begot Methushael ["man who is of God"]; and Methushael begot Lamech [of obscure meaning]. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of one was Adah ["ornament"], and the name of the other Zillah ["shadow" or "defense"]. And Adah bore Jabal [from a root meaning, "to flow," "to lead," or "to bring forth"]: he was the father of such as dwell in tents and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal [from same root as for Jabal]: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe. And Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain [perhaps "Tubal the smith"], the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron; and the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah ["pleasantness"].

Our attention focuses on Lamech, the seventh—the completed or fulfilled—generation of the line (through Cain) begun by Adam. It is in this generation that civilization flowers. With one wife an ornament, the other a shadowy protector, Lamech has children who teach men how to protect and adorn themselves: they introduce tents (fixed habitations against the elements and for protection of privacy), cattle (a new form of wealth), music (the arts of memory and song), and metallurgy (the transformative art of forging tools and also weapons). Human beings, now externally well equipped, undergo coincident changes in their souls. In particular, vanity—the desire to be well-regarded by those around—grows to dangerous proportions.

> And Lamech said unto his wives: "Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; For I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my bruising. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

Lamech combines poetry and prowess in his own person; he sings (the Hebrew is in high poetic style) of his own exploits in fighting, and boasts of his great superiority, ten times greater than Cain's, greater even than God in vengeance. Lamech, a combination Achilles-and-Homer, belongs to the heroic age, made possible by the arts, especially music and metallurgy; he seeks nothing less than immortal fame, not to say apotheosis itself, by being master of life and death.

We are now in a position to pull together some threads, connecting the deeds of Cain and the civilization that rests upon them. Concerned with his position as number one, eager to establish himself as lord and master of his domain, Cain (like Romulus, the mythic founder of Rome) commits the paradigmatic crime of the political founder: fratricide. For the aspiration to rule entails necessarily the denial and destruction of radical human equality, epitomized in the relationship of brotherhood. To wish to rule, to

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dominate, to be in command, means—by its very nature—the wish not only to remove all rivals, but also to destroy the brotherly relation with those under one's dominion. And, personal ambitions aside, civil order in the city once founded needs authority and hierarchy (perhaps even divinely sactioned); not simple equality but rule is required. The ruler, as ruler, has no brothers.

The more that rude and ambitious men have to do with one another, the more they both have to fear and seek to outdo one another. For both reasons—safety and pride—they cultivate prowess in fighting. And the city begun in fear often proudly begets one of heroic ambition. Because all human cities—that is, all political communities—necessarily distinguish between insiders and outsiders, even an unambitious city must be willing to kill its human brothers, in defense of its own citizens. There is a direct line from the plowshare to the sword.

But the context here is not simply political. Cain was jealous over a matter of *divine* favor. Cain was the first to be interested in bridging the gap—in his case, by gifts—between the human and the divine, an impulse we have shown to be largely hubristic. This prototypical human being begets a line leading to civilization, the arts, and the heroes—all manifestations of an impulse that culminates in a desire to jump the gap entirely, in a wish to *become* a god. Lamech, the hero, acts as if he has succeeded; but we, readers prepared by what has come before, know that he is self-deceived.

The present story—of Cain and Abel, and of the line of Cain to Lamech—does not explicitly give the reasons for rejecting paganism; but it surely paints a vivid picture of the bloody indecency connected with the way of Cain and the pursuit of self-sufficiency and heroism. The elements of the human soul that lead in this direction are shown to be, to say the least, problematic. So too our much vaunted "knowledge" of good and bad. Seeing something of himself in the mirror of this story, the reader is stimulated to hope that there is an alternative to the human-all-too-human way of Cain.

The menacing outcome of the line of Cain—the line of pride, presumption, violence, the arts of death, and the desire for apotheosis—begs for another way. We are not disappointed. The story ends as it began, with a new birth.

> And Adam knew his wife again; and she bore a son, and called his name Seth: "for God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him." And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

Though the description echoes closely the birth of Cain, there are crucial differences. No longer boastful, Eve is, instead, subdued. The death of Abel hangs heavily upon her, as does the fact that it was Cain, her pride and joy (but now also lost to her), who slew him. Chastened regarding also her own pride in Cain's birth, she feels only gratitude in the birth of Seth. She feels the beneficence of powers beyond her, here manifested in the birth of a much-wanted replacement. Seth, unlike Cain, is received as a gift—from beyond, precious, unmerited. Seth, unlike Cain, will be less likely to suffer from excessive parental expectations. Tragedy has humbled parental pride; woman and man no longer stand as creators and claimants upon the world, but as grateful recipients of the blessings of new life.

To Seth also is born a son, whom he names Enosh, a name that means "man, understood as *mortal*"—a meaning less dignified than that of *adam* ("man," understood as "from the earth," *adamah*). Enosh, mortal man, in the line of Seth, corresponds to Enoch, disciplined dedication, in the line of Cain: the greater modesty of the new beginnings is evident in the names. No longer disciplined in trying to jump the gap between man and god, the line of Seth is marked near its start by the memory of Abel's death and by the recognition of the difference between mortal man and immortal God.

In keeping with this new recognition, "men began to call upon the name of the Lord." How they called or what they said the text keeps inaudible—in sharp contrast to the loud vauntings of Lamech, or even to the explicit report of the goods brought in sacrifice by Cain and Abel. True, there remains a more than residual presumption in calling upon God—as if He should care for me—and, even more, in the familiarity of calling Him by name. But at the same time we have what seems like a spontaneous calling out—springing from the heart without calculation—probably out of need and fear, perhaps also out of love or respect. Recognizing the gap between man and God, Seth, Enosh, and their kin call out across it, hoping someone will listen. Of God's response, we know nothing. But we cannot help but think that some progress has been made: the new approach to the divine proceeds through speech and hearing, not through gifts of food that we hope God might fancy. Someone seems to have divined that it is not through material means—or through pride of place or acquisition—that man can hope to stand in fitting relation to God. Someone seems to have divined that—more than the arts and sciences, power, and prosperity—decent human life and human relations require just such a reverent and attentive orientation to the divine.

Even a civilized and sophisticated reader, late in the twentieth century, cannot help but agree. Chastened by this profound tale that mirrors the dark recesses of our own souls and that exposes the shady and violent origins of the human city, we are ready to read on and to receive further instruction. FT

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Are the Gospels Mythical?

René Girard

From the earliest days of Christianity, the Gospels' resemblance to certain myths has been used as an argument against Christian faith. When pagan apologists for the official pantheism of the Roman empire denied that the death-and-resurrection myth of Jesus differed in any significant way from the myths of Dionysus, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, etc., they failed to stem the rising Christian tide. In the last two hundred years, however, as anthropologists have discovered all over the world foundational myths that similarly resemble Jesus' Passion and Resurrection, the notion of Christianity as a myth seems at last to have taken hold—even among Christian believers.

Beginning with some violent cosmic or social crisis, and culminating in the suffering of a mysterious victim (often at the hands of a furious mob), all these myths conclude with the triumphal return of the sufferer, thereby revealed as a divinity. The kind of anthropological research undertaken before World War II—in which theorists struggled to account for resemblances among myths—is regarded as a hopeless "metaphysical" failure by most anthropologists nowadays. Its failure seems, however, not to have weakened anthropology's skeptical scientific spirit, but only to have weakened further, in some mysterious way, the plausibility of the dogmatic claims of religion that the earlier theorists had hoped to supersede: if science itself cannot formulate universal truths of human nature, then religion—as manifestly inferior to science—must be even more devalued than we had supposed.

This is the contemporary intellectual situation Christian thinkers face as they read the Scriptures. The Cross is incomparable insofar as its victim is the Son of God, but in every other respect it is a human event. An analysis of that event—exploring the anthropological aspects of the Passion that we cannot neglect if we take the dogma of the Incarnation seriously—not only reveals the falsity of contemporary anthropology's skepticism about human nature. It also utterly discredits the notion that Christianity is in any sense mythological. The world's myths do not reveal a way to interpret the Gospels, but exactly the reverse: the Gospels reveal to us the way to interpret myth.

Jesus does, of course, compare his own story to certain others when he says that his death will be like the death of the prophets: "The blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (Luke 11:50-51). What, we must ask, does the word *like* really mean here? In the death most strikingly similar to the Passion—that of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, chapters 52-53—a crowd unites against a single victim, just as similar crowds unite against Jeremiah, Job, the narrators of the penitential psalms, etc. In Genesis, Joseph is cast out by the envious crowd of his brothers. All these episodes of violence have the same all-against-one structure.

Since John the Baptist is a prophet, we may expect his violent death in the New Testament to be similar, and indeed John dies because Herod's guests turn into a murderous crowd. Herod himself is as inclined to spare John's life as Pilate is to spare Jesus'—but leaders who do not stand up to violent crowds are bound to join them, and join them both Herod and Pilate do. Ancient people typically regarded ritual dancing as the most *mimetic* of all arts, solidifying the participants of a sacrifice against the soon to be immolated victim. The hostile polarization against John results from Salome's dancing—a result foreseen and cleverly engineered by Herodias for exactly that purpose.

There is no equivalent of Salome's dancing in Jesus' Passion, but a mimetic or imitative dimension is obviously present. The crowd that gathers against Jesus is the same that had enthusiastically welcomed

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him into Jerusalem a few days earlier. The sudden reversal is typical of unstable crowds everywhere: rather than a deep-seated hatred for the victim, it suggests a wave of contagious violence.

Peter spectacularly illustrates this mimetic contagion. When surrounded by people hostile to Jesus, he imitates their hostility. He obeys the same mimetic force, ultimately, as Pilate and Herod. Even the thieves crucified with Jesus obey that force and feel compelled to join the crowd. And yet, I think, the Gospels do not seek to stigmatize Peter, or the thieves, or the crowd as a whole, or the Jews as a people, but to reveal the enormous power of mimetic contagion—a revelation valid for the entire chain of murders stretching from the Passion back to "the foundation of the world." The Gospels have an immensely powerful reason for their constant reference to these murders, and it concerns two essential and yet strangely neglected words, *skandalon* and *Satan.*

The traditional English translation of *stumbling block* is far superior to timid recent translations, for the Greek *skandalon* designates an unavoidable obstacle that somehow becomes more attractive (as well as repulsive) each time we stumble against it. The first time Jesus predicts his violent death (Matthew 16:21-23), his resignation appalls Peter, who tries to instill some worldly ambition in his master: Instead of imitating Jesus, Peter wants Jesus to imitate him. If two friends imitate each other's desire, they both desire the same object. And if they cannot share this object, they will compete for it, each becoming simultaneously a model and an obstacle to the other. The competing desires intensify as model and obstacle reinforce each other, and an escalation of mimetic rivalry follows; admiration gives way to indignation, jealousy, envy, hatred, and, at last, violence and vengeance. Had Jesus imitated Peter's ambition, the two thereby would have begun competing for the leadership of some politicized "Jesus movement." Sensing the danger, Jesus vehemently interrupts Peter: "Get behind me, Satan, you are a *skandalon* to me."

The more our models impede our desires, the more fascinating they become *as models.* Scandals can be sexual, no doubt, but they are not primarily a matter of sex any more than of worldly ambition. They must be defined in terms not of their objects but of their obstacle/model escalation—their mimetic rivalry that is the sinful dynamics of human conflict and its psychic misery. If the problem of mimetic rivalry escapes us, we may mistake Jesus' prescriptions for some social utopia. The truth is rather that scandals are such a threat that nothing should be spared to avoid them. At the first hint, we should abandon the disputed object to our rivals and accede even to their most outrageous demands; we should "turn the other cheek."

If we choose Jesus as our model, we simultaneously choose his own model, God the Father. Having no appropriative desire, Jesus proclaims the possibility of freedom from scandal. But if we choose possessive models we find ourselves in endless scandals, for our real model is *Satan.* A seductive tempter who suggests to us the desires most likely to generate rivalries, Satan prevents us from reaching whatever he simultaneously incites us to desire. He turns into a *diabolos* (another word that designates the obstacle/model of mimetic rivalry). Satan is *skandalon* personified, as Jesus makes explicit in his rebuke of Peter.

Since most human beings do not follow Jesus, scandals must happen (Matthew 18:7), proliferating in ways that ought to endanger the collective survival of the human race—for once we understand the terrifying power of escalating mimetic desire, no society seems capable of standing against it. And yet, though many societies perish, new societies manage to be born, and quite a few established societies manage to find ways to survive or regenerate. Some counterforce must be at work, not powerful enough to terminate scandals once and for all, and yet sufficient to moderate their impact and keep them under some control.

This counterforce is, I believe, the mythological scapegoat—the sacrificial victim of myth. When scandals proliferate, human beings become so obsessed with their rivals that they lose sight of the objects for which they compete and begin to focus angrily on one another. As the borrowing of the model's object shifts to the borrowing of the rival's hatred, acquisitive mimesis turns into a mimesis of antagonists. More and more individuals polarize against fewer and fewer enemies until, in the end, only one is left. Because everyone believes in the guilt of the last victim, they all turn against him—and since that victim is now isolated and helpless, they can do so with no danger of retaliation. As a result, no enemy remains for anybody in the community. Scandals evaporate and peace returns—for a while.

Society's preservation against the unlimited violence of scandals lies in the mimetic coalition against the single victim and its ensuing limited violence. The violent death of Jesus is, humanly speaking, an example of this strange process. Before it begins, Jesus warns his disciples (and especially Peter) that they will be "scandalized" by him (Mark 14:27). This use of *skandalizein* suggests that the mimetic force at work in the all-against-one violence is the same violence at work in mimetic rivalries between individuals. In preventing a riot and dispersing a crowd, the Crucifixion is an example of cathartic victimization. A fascinating detail in the gospel makes clear the cathartic effects of the mimetic murder—and allows us to distinguish them from the Crucifixion's Christian effects. At the end of his Passion account, Luke writes, "And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other" (23:12). This reconcilia-

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tion outwardly resembles Christian communion—since it originates in Jesus' death—and yet it has nothing to do with it. It is a cathartic effect rooted in the mimetic contagion.

Jesus' persecutors do not realize that they influence one another mimetically. Their ignorance does not cancel their responsibility, but it does lessen it: "Father, forgive them," Jesus cries, "for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). A parallel statement in Acts 3:17 shows that this must be interpreted literally. Peter ascribes to ignorance the behavior of the crowd and its leaders. His personal experience of the mimetic compulsion that possesses crowds prevents him from regarding himself immune to the violent contagion of victimization.

The role of Satan, the personification of scandals, helps us to understand the mimetic conception of the Gospels. To the question *How can Satan cast out Satan?* (Mark 3:23), the answer is unanimous victimization. On the one hand, Satan is the instigator of scandal, the force that disintegrates communities; on the other hand, he is the resolution of scandal in unanimous victimization. This trick of last resort enables the prince of this world to rescue his possessions in extremis, when they are too badly threatened by his own disorder. Being both a principle of disorder and a principle of order, Satan is truly divided against himself.

The famous portrayal of the mimetic murder of John the Baptist occurs—in both Mark and Matthew—as a curious flashback. By beginning with an account of Herod's eager seizing hold of the rumor of John's resurrection, and only then going back in time to narrate John's death, Mark and Matthew reveal the origin of Herod's compulsive belief in his own decisive participation in the murder. The evangelists give a fleeting but precious example of *mythic genesis*—of the ordering power of violence, of its ability to found culture. Herod's belief is vestigial, to be sure, but the fact that two Gospels mention it confirms, I think, the evangelical authenticity of the doctrine that grounds mythology in mimetic victimization.

Modern Christians are often made uncomfortable by this false resurrection that seems to resemble the true one, but Mark and Matthew obviously do not share their embarrassment. Far from downplaying the similarities, they attract our attention to them, much as Luke attracts our attention to the resemblance between Christian communion and the unholy reconciliation of Herod and Pilate as a result of Jesus' death. The evangelists see something very simple and fundamental that we ourselves should see. As soon as we become reconciled to the similarities between violence in the Bible and myths, we can understand how the Bible is *not* mythical—how the reaction to violence recorded in the Bible radically differs from the reaction recorded in myth.

Beginning with the story of Cain and Abel, the Bible proclaims the innocence of mythical victims and the guilt of their victimizers. Living after the widespread promulgation of the gospel, we find this natural and never pause to think that in classical myths the opposite is true: the persecutors always seem to have a valid cause to persecute their victims. The Dionysiac myths regard even the most horrible lynchings as legitimate. Pentheus in the *Bacchae* is legitimately slain by his mother and sisters, for his contempt of the god Dionysus is a fault serious enough to warrant his death. Oedipus, too, deserves his fate. According to the myth, he has truly killed his father and married his mother, and is thus truly responsible for the plague that ravages Thebes. To cast him out is not merely a permissible action, but a religious duty.

Even if they are not accused of any crime, mythical victims are still supposed to die for a good cause, and their innocence makes their deaths no less legitimate. In the Vedic myth of Purusha, for instance, no wrongdoing is mentioned—but the tearing apart of the victim is nonetheless a holy deed. The pieces of Purusha's body are needed to create the three great castes, the mainstay of Indian society. In myth, violent death is always justified.

If the violence of myths is purely mimetic—if it is like the Passion, as Jesus says—all these justifications are false. And yet, since they systematically reverse the true distribution of innocence and guilt, such myths cannot be purely fictional. They are lies, certainly, but the specific kind of lie called for by mimetic contagion—the false accusation that spreads mimetically throughout a disturbed human community at the climax when scandals polarize against the single scapegoat whose death reunites the community. The myth-making machine is the mimetic contagion that disappears behind the myth it generates.

There is nothing secret about the justifications espoused by myths; the stereotypical accusations of mob violence are always available when the search for scapegoats is on. In the Gospels, however, the scapegoating machinery is fully visible because it encounters opposition and no longer operates efficiently. The resistance to the mimetic contagion prevents the myth from taking shape. The conclusion in the light of the Gospels is inescapable: myths are the voice of communities that unanimously surrender to the mimetic contagion of victimization.

This interpretation is reinforced by the optimistic endings of myths. The conjunction of the guilty victim and the reconciled community is too frequent to be fortuitous. The only possible explanation is the distorted representation of unanimous victimization. The violent process is not effective unless it fools all witnesses, and the proof that it does, in the case of myths, is the harmonious and cathartic conclusion, rooted in a perfectly unanimous murder.

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We hear nowadays that, behind every text and every event, there are an infinite number of interpretations, all more or less equivalent. Mimetic victimization makes the absurdity of this view manifest. Only two possible reactions to the mimetic contagion exist, and they make an enormous difference. Either we surrender and join the persecuting crowd, or we resist and stand alone. The first way is the unanimous self-deception we call mythology. The second way is the road to the truth followed by the Bible.

Instead of blaming victimization on the victims, the Gospels blame it on the victimizers. What the myths systematically hide, the Bible reveals. This difference is not merely "moralistic" (as Nietzsche believed) or a matter of subjective choice; it is a question of truth. When the Bible and the Gospels say that the victims should have been spared, they do not merely "take pity" on them. They puncture the illusion of the unanimous victimization that foundational myths use as a crisis-solving and reordering device of human communities.

When we examine myths in the light of the Gospels, even their most enigmatic features become intelligible. Consider, for example, the disabilities and abnormalities that seem always to plague mythical heroes. Oedipus limps, as do quite a few of his fellow heroes and divinities. Others have only one leg, or one arm, or one eye, or are blind, hunchbacked, etc. Others still are unusually tall or unusually short. Some have a disgusting skin disease, or a body odor so strong that it plagues their neighbors. In a crowd, even minor disabilities and singularities will arouse discomfort and, should trouble erupt, their possessors are likely to be selected as victims. The preponderance of cripples and freaks among mythical heroes must be a statistical consequence of the type of victimization that generates mythology. So too the preponderance of "strangers": in all isolated groups, outsiders arouse a curiosity that may quickly turn to hostility during a panic. Mimetic violence is essentially disoriented; deprived of valid causes, it selects its victims according to minuscule signs and pseudo-causes that we may identify as preferential signs of victimization.

In the Bible, the false or insignificant causes of mythical violence are effectively dismissed in the simple and sweeping statement, *They hated me without a cause* (John 15:25), in which Jesus quotes and virtually summarizes Psalm 35—one of the "scapegoat psalms" that literally turns the mob's mythical justifications inside out. Instead of the mob speaking to justify violence with causes that it perceives as legitimate, the victim speaks to denounce the causes as nonexistent.

To explicate archaic myths, we need only follow the method Jesus recommends and substitute this *without cause* for the false mythical causes. In the Byzantine Empire, I understand, the Oedipus tragedy was read as an analogue of the Christian Passion. If true, those early anthropologists were approaching the right problem from the wrong end. Their reduction of the Gospels to an ordinary myth snuffed the evangelical light with mythology. In order to succeed, one must illuminate the obscurity of myth with the intelligence of the Gospels.

If unanimous victimization reconciles and reorders societies in direct proportion to its concealment, then it must lose its effectiveness in direct proportion to its revelation. When the mythical lie is publicly denounced, the polarization of scandals is no longer unanimous and the social catharsis weakens and disappears. Instead of reconciling the community, the victimization must intensify divisions and dissensions.

These disruptive consequences should be felt in the Gospels and, indeed, they are. In the Gospel of John, for instance, everything Jesus does and says has a divisive effect. Far from downplaying this fact, the author repeatedly draws our attention to it. Similarly, in Matthew 10:34, Jesus says, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." If the only peace humanity has ever enjoyed depends on unconscious victimization, the consciousness that the Gospels bring into the world can only destroy it.

The image of Satan—"a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44)—also expresses this opposition between the mythical obscuring and the evangelical revealing of victimization. The Crucifixion as a defeat for Satan, Jesus' prediction that Satan "is coming to an end" (Mark 3:26), implies less an orderly world than one in which Satan is on the loose. Instead of concluding with the reassuring harmony of myths, the New Testament opens up apocalyptic perspectives, in the synoptic Gospels equally with the Book of Revelation. To reach "the peace that surpasseth all understanding," humanity must give up its old, partial peace founded on victimization—and a great deal of turmoil can be expected. The apocalyptic dimension is not an alien element that should be purged from the New Testament in order to "improve" Christianity, it is an integral part of revelation.

Satan tries to silence Jesus through the very process that Jesus subverts. He has good reasons to believe that his old mimetic trick should still produce, with Jesus as victim, what it has always produced in the past: one more myth of the usual type, a closed system of mythical lies. He has good reasons to believe that the mimetic contagion against Jesus will prove irresistible once again and that the revelation will be squelched.

Satan's expectations are disappointed. The Gospels do everything that the Bible had done before, rehabilitating a victimized prophet, a wrongly accused victim. But they also universalize this rehabilitation. They show that, since the foundation of the world, the victims of all Passion-like murders have been victims of the same mimetic contagion as Jesus. The Gospels make the revelation complete. They give to the biblical denunciation of idolatry a

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concrete demonstration of how false gods and their violent cultural systems are generated. *This* is the truth missing from mythology, the truth that subverts the violent system of this world. If the Gospels were mythical themselves, they could not provide the knowledge that demythologizes mythology.

Christianity, however, is not reducible to a logical scheme. The revelation of unanimous victimization cannot involve an entire community—else there would be no one to reveal it. It can only be the achievement of a dissenting minority bold enough to challenge the official truth, and yet too small to prevent a near-unanimous episode of victimization from occurring. Such a minority, however, is extremely vulnerable and ought normally to be swallowed up in the mimetic contagion. Humanly speaking, the revelation is an impossibility.

In most biblical texts, the dissenting minority remains invisible, but in the Gospels it coincides with the group of the first Christians. The Gospels dramatize the human impossibility by insisting on the disciples' inability to resist the crowd during the Passion (especially Peter, who denies Jesus three times in the High Priest's courtyard). And yet, after the Crucifixion—which should have made matters worse than ever—this pathetic handful of weaklings suddenly succeeds in doing what they had been unable to do when Jesus was still there to help them: boldly proclaim the innocence of the victim in open defiance of the victimizers, become the fearless apostles and missionaries of the early Church.

The Resurrection is responsible for this change, of course, but even this most amazing miracle would not have sufficed to transform these men so completely if it had been an isolated wonder rather than the first manifestation of the redemptive power of the Cross. An anthropological analysis enables us to say that, just as the revelation of the Christian victim differs from mythical revelations because it is not rooted in the illusion of the guilty scapegoat, so the Christian Resurrection differs from mythical ones because its witnesses are the people who ultimately overcome the contagion of victimization (such as Peter and Paul), and not the people who surrender to it (such as Herod and Pilate). The Christian Resurrection is indispensable to the purely anthropological revelation of unanimous victimization and to the demythologizing of mythical resurrections.

Jesus' death is a source of grace not because the Father is "avenged" by it, but because Jesus lived and died in the manner that, if adopted by all, would do away with scandals and the victimization that follows from scandals. Jesus lived as all men should live in order to be united with a God Whose true nature he reveals.

Obeying perfectly the anti-mimetic prescriptions he recommends, Jesus has not the slightest tendency toward mimetic rivalry and victimization. And he dies, paradoxically, because of this perfect innocence. He becomes a victim of the process from which he will liberate mankind. When one man alone follows the prescriptions of the kingdom of God it seems an intolerable provocation to all those who do not, and this man automatically designates himself as the victim of all men. This paradox fully reveals "the sin of the world," the inability of man to free himself from his violent ways.

During Jesus' life, the dissenting minority of those who resist the mimetic contagion is really limited to one man, Jesus himself—who is simultaneously the most arbitrary victim (because he deserves his violent death less than anyone else) and the least arbitrary victim (because his perfection is an unforgivable insult to the violent world). He is the scapegoat of choice, the lamb of God whom we all choose unconsciously even when not aware of choosing any victim.

When Jesus dies alone, abandoned by his apostles, the persecutors are unanimous once again. Were the Gospels trying to tell a myth, the truth Jesus had tried to reveal would then be buried once and for all and the stage would be set for the triumphal revelation of the mythological victim as the divine source of the reordering of society through the "good" scapegoating violence that puts an end to the bad mimetic violence that had threatened the society.

If such a death-and-resurrection myth is not what happens this time—if Satan in the end is foiled—the immediate cause is a sudden burst of courage in the disciples. But the strength for that did not come from themselves. It visibly flows from the innocent death of Jesus. Divine grace makes the disciples more like Jesus, who had announced before his death that they would be helped by the Holy Spirit of truth. This is one reason, I believe, the Gospel of John calls the Spirit of God the *Paraclete*, a Greek word that simply means the lawyer for the defense, the defender of the accused before a tribunal. The Paraclete is, among other things, the counterpart of the Accuser: the Spirit of Truth who gives the definitive refutation of the satanic lie. That is why Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8: "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God. . . . None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

The true Resurrection is based not on the mythical lie of the guilty victim who deserves to die, but on the rectification of that lie, which comes from the true God and which reopens channels of communication mankind itself had closed through self-imprisonment in its own violent cultures. Divine grace alone can explain why, after the Resurrection, the disciples could become a dissenting minority in an ocean of victimization—could understand then what they had misunderstood earlier: the innocence not of Jesus alone but of all victims of all Passion-like murders since the foundation of the world. FT

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Second Thoughts About Body Parts

Gilbert Meilaender

Almost forty thousand Americans are currently on waiting lists, hoping to receive a donated organ. Many of these—especially those awaiting a heart or liver transplant—face situations that are immediately life-threatening, and they will die if a suitable organ for transplant is not found quickly. At the same time, about ten thousand Americans die each year in circumstances—often because of accidents causing severe head injuries—that make them potential organ donors. After they have been declared dead because of the complete cessation of brain activity, but while heart and lung activity in the corpse is being artifically maintained to prevent organ deterioration, both tissues and organs—cornea, heart, lung, kidney, liver—can be taken for transplantation.

A recent study indicated that, despite the seeming need for organs, only about 40 percent of the ten thousand actually become donors. In most cases the reason is that the dead person's family refuses a request to take the organs for transplant. If such refusal is a thoughtless act, one might argue that we should look for new ways to persuade families to consent to organ donation after the death of a loved one. Thus, the death of Mickey Mantle after a liver transplantation has been seized as the occasion for encouraging organ donation. Many people who might never attend a talk or read a magazine article about transplantation may be influenced by hearing Bob Costas speak about the importance of this effort to remember Mantle. If such refusal is not just thoughtless but morally wrong, one might argue that we should override it—perhaps by authorizing medical professionals routinely to salvage, without prior request for approval, cadaver organs for transplant. And a growing number of voices seem prepared to argue for such a policy. If such refusal is motivated by concerns that are selfish or, at least, self-regarding, one might argue that we should fight fire with fire by offering to compensate the family for donated organs—appealing to their self-regarding impulses in order to achieve desirable social aims. And such arguments continue to get a hearing in our society.

On the other hand, if weighty—albeit often unarticulated—reasons may underlie such refusals, we ought to be very skeptical about the increasing social pressure to encourage organ donation and transplantation. These are not just questions of public policy. They are also questions that pit our deep-seated hunger to live longer and our fear of death against equally deep-seated notions of the sacredness of human life *in the body*. In what follows I consider the road we have traveled in making our peace with organ donation and transplantation. Without rejecting that road entirely, I aim to reflect upon its ambiguities and upon what Christians in particular might now say about such "progress." Our rhetoric has generally favored organ donation, but we must learn to be circumspect in the use of such rhetoric.

I

In the late 1960s the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act was passed into law in every state in this country. It allows individuals, while still living, to authorize the donation of any parts of their body after death. If the deceased person had not authorized such donation but also had not prohibited it, specified family members are permitted to give authorization. The National Organ Transplantation Act, passed by Congress in 1984, established a national registry and donor-recipient matching system while also prohibiting the sale of organs for transplant. Some states have, in addition, passed laws requiring medical personnel to ask the family of the deceased to donate his or her organs. Thus, we have given social approval to a system in which needed organs are donated but not

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to systems in which they are routinely taken without permission or sold as commodities on the open market. Nevertheless, this system of giving and receiving has not provided as many donated organs as are desired for transplant purposes.

On some occasions organs are given by *living* donors, but this can be permitted only within clear limits. Years ago Paul Ramsey called attention to one of those limits, recounting the following fictitious case study:

> Many months ago the fifteen-year-old son of Mr. Roger Johnson was admitted to a Houston, Texas hospital for tests to determine the cause of his generally debilitated condition. Use of the latest available diagnostic techniques and equipment eventually led to the conclusion that the lad was suffering from a progressively deteriorating congenital condition of the valves of the heart. The prognosis communicated to the distraught Mr. Johnson was that his son could not live past the age of twenty, and that there was no known treatment for the malady with which he was afflicted.
>
> At first Mr. Johnson tried to resign himself to his son's plight. Then he began to brood and think of the pleasures and joys of adult life which he, at the age of forty-two, had already known, but which his son would never know. The more he thought of this, the less willing he became passively to accept the doctors' verdict. Finally he thought of a means by which his son's life might be spared.
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> His plan, which he communicated to a physician friend, was an uncomplicated one. In light of the success of recent heart transplant operations with unrelated donors and donees, he reasoned, there must be a high probability that a transplant of the heart of a genetic relative would be successful. Accordingly, he would simply donate his own heart to his son. He had lived a full life, he said, and he could leave his son well provided for financially. His wife had died several years earlier, so that complication was not present. His own parents had no rightful claim to his continued life. He asked his friend's aid in finding a physician who would perform the operation. Not without considerable misgivings, his friend complied, eventually finding a heart surgeon eager to attempt the transplant of a heart from a healthy and related donor not in extremis at the time of the operation.
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> In the course of preparation for the transplant, elaborate precaution was taken to ensure that the son would not know the real nature of the proposed operation. He was told simply that a transplant operation on his heart was to be attempted in the hope of prolonging his life, and he agreed to try it with full knowledge that death could certainly result if the try were unsuccessful. In reality, of course, it was contemplated that Mr. Johnson's heart would be removed from his chest while he was under general anaesthesia and that it would be transplanted in the chest cavity of his son.
>
> When the date of the scheduled operation arrived, the father went to the son's room, affectionately wished him good luck, and returned to his own room to be prepared for his own operation. He was eventually placed under general anaesthesia, and taken to a special operating room to await the transfer of his heart to an oxygenating and circulating "heart-lung" machine.
>
> He is in the operating room now, and the surgeon is scrubbing. You are chief of staff in the hospital in which the operation is to take place. You had no prior knowledge of the operation, but this is frequently so. A worried nurse has brought you word of the planned operation on this occasion. You have power to stop the operation. Should you do it?

The case is striking because it makes clear what Christian rhetoric about "love" and "freedom" sometimes blurs: Not every gift can properly be given by those who know themselves to be creatures rather than Creator. The body, as the place of personal presence, has its own integrity, which ought to be respected. Indeed, because we are regarded as stewards rather than owners of our bodily life, the Roman Catholic and Jewish traditions generally forbade self-mutilation. These traditions have become willing to approve the self-giving of organs or tissues for transplantation as long as the donation will not cause grave harm to the donor's bodily life. Certainly any organ donation—such as that of heart, liver, or lung—that would cause death or great harm to a living donor is not a proper work of creaturely love. (Interestingly, an increasingly secular society, in which many people do not share Christian and Jewish disapproval of suicide, may find it hard to explain why such donations should be forbidden or why the case study recounted from Ramsey should remain fictitious.)

In general, therefore, we may regard donation of a kidney or of bone marrow as significantly different from donation of heart, lung, or liver. (In recent years partial grafts of liver and lung tissue, which do not involve transplantation of the entire organ, have been attempted. To the degree these procedures are successful, our evaluation of them will, no doubt, be similar to our evalution of bone marrow donation.) Yet, a living donor's gift even of tissue or a paired organ (such as the kidney) should not be approved without careful reflection. Doctors have in the past been hesitant to transplant kidneys from living, *unrelated* donors, and it is good that they should be. We

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should want them to be reluctant to subject a healthy person to the risks of a major operation and the loss of one kidney even if that person is eager to make this bodily gift. It is true, of course, that we ought always be ready to risk harm to ourselves for the sake of others. But it is one thing to aim at my neighbor's good, knowing that in so doing I may be harmed; it is another to aim at my own harm *in order* to do good to my neighbor. We need not oppose all organ donation from living donors, but neither should we regard such cases as morally uncomplicated.

In recent years the number of kidney donations from living *unrelated* donors has increased. In part this has been due to a growing willingness to accept donation from the spouse of a patient suffering from kidney disease, but there have also been cases of such donations between friends or even, simply, acquaintances. Because the increased willingness to permit such donations is due in part to the pressure for organs and the desire of transplant surgeons to do what they can to meet that need, we must beware of the *tyranny of the possible*—the pressure to suppose that we are obligated to do whatever we are able to do. Bioethicists generally worry that unrelated donors might be pressured or paid, or that spouses might feel a kind of pressure that keeps their consent from being truly free.

No doubt such concerns are legitimate and are worth our attention. Consent is not the only important moral issue, however, and those worries ought not obscure an even larger underlying issue: the integrity of bodily life. If we learn to regard our bodies simply as collections of organs potentially useful to others, we are in danger of losing any close connection between the person and the body. That connection has always been affirmed in Christian thought, although it has often been a fragile connection. We are regularly tempted to suppose that the "real" person transcends the body, and, when we do, dehumanization lies near at hand. An acute sense of that dehumanizing tendency to regard our bodies as collections of alienable parts moved Leon Kass to refer to organ transplantation as "simply a noble form of cannibalism." That striking phrase is not overdone as long we take the whole of it seriously. Not just cannibalism, but *noble* cannibalism. Kass would not have us ignore the nobility involved in gifts of the body, but neither would he have us think too casually about the body's own integrity and its meaning as the place of personal presence.

Because of reservations about organs given by living donors, the tendency in transplantation (since the discovery of drugs to suppress the body's immune reaction that rejects foreign tissue) has been to use cadaver organs taken immediately after death. (This assumes, of course, that the deceased had, while still living, authorized such donation, or that appropriate family members have done so after his death.) And, of course, from a cadaver one can take for transplant not only a paired organ such as the kidney but unpaired organs such as the heart. Is there any reason not to approve such donations? Is there, in fact, any reason why Christians should not be encouraged to make such gifts of the body?

We should note first that here too a certain caution is in order. Given the increasing pressure to make more organs available for transplant, we will see a growing tendency to think of cadaver organs as a communal resource available for the taking—unless perhaps the family of the deceased objects. That tendency ignores the human significance of burial and a family's desire to take leave of a loved one. William F. May once noted that it is "wrong, indecorous, and enraging" to force a family "to *claim the body as its possession*, only in order to proceed with rites in the course of which it must acknowledge the process of surrender and separation." May recalled a tale from the Brothers Grimm in which a young man who is incapable of horror and does not shrink back from the dead attempts even to play with a corpse and is sent away "to learn how to shudder." If families are often reluctant to authorize organ donation after the death of a loved one, that reluctance ought to be honored—lest we collectively forget how to shudder. Indeed, I do not think it wise even to act upon the deceased person's previously stated willingness to be a donor in the face of family reluctance or objection. Our society's desperate attempt to find ways to live longer should not be allowed to override a deep-seated and difficult to articulate sense of the importance of the body, even the dead body.

II

When cyclosporine, the first powerful immunosuppressive drug, was discovered in 1972, transplantation technology was revolutionized. If the immune system's rejection of an alien organ could be overcome, the possibilities seemed endless. No longer would transplants be conceivable only if donor and recipient were closely enough related to be a good match. And once donation from strangers became reasonable to contemplate, it also became possible to move beyond living donors' gifts of paired vital organs (such as a kidney) to transplantation of unpaired vital organs (such as the heart or liver) from cadaver donors. But the crucial conceptual notion here is that of "brain death."

In 1968 an ad hoc committee at Harvard recommended a neurological criterion—cessation of brain activity—for determining death. Prior to that, cessation of heart and lung activity—a cardiopulmonary criterion—had been generally used to mark the point of death. But it had by then become possible to sustain heart and lung activity (with a respirator) for days or even weeks after a patient had irreversibly lost all brain function. Therefore, the two traditional

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"vital signs" of heart and lung activity could be maintained solely through mechanical assistance. In these circumstances it made sense to many to say that a human being actually dies when brain activity ends, because only that activity makes possible the body's ability to function as an integrated whole.

The Harvard committee attempted simply to fix criteria on the basis of which physicians could determine that a patient was neurologically dead. Its criteria—including lack of responsiveness, no breathing or movement (when off the respirator), no reflexes, and a flat EEG—have been largely accepted and written into law in the years since then. The Harvard criteria were intended to determine when *all* brain activity had ended, when "whole brain" death had occurred. A person can, of course, suffer the loss of "higher" brain (cortical) function, losing the capacities for awareness or self-consciousness, while brain stem functions (controlling spontaneous breathing, eye-opening, etc.) remain. According to the Harvard criteria, loss of higher brain functions alone did not constitute death, and the laws of our states that have established criteria for determining brain death have had *whole* brain death in view.

We have learned, then, to think of death as a single phenomenon whose presence is indicated *either* by irreversible loss of heart and lung function (the traditional criterion) *or* by irreversible loss of all brain function. This is not unreasonable, but the concept of "brain death" remains conceptually and experientially puzzling in some ways. It permits transplant surgeons to retrieve the organs of a neurologically dead person while, because of mechanical assistance, circulation of oxygenated blood sustains the vitality of those organs in the "corpse." Yet, of course, even if we agreed that irreversible loss of whole brain function established that the person was dead, we would be reluctant to bury a corpse until its heart had ceased to beat. We seem willing, therefore, to remove organs for transplant from a corpse before we would be willing to bury it. The body has died, because it can no longer function as an integrated whole; yet, with mechanical assistance some organs and tissues, taken by themselves, retain vitality. If that makes us uneasy, we might prefer to remove mechanical assistance and let the body die "all the way." But then, of course, its organs are unlikely to be usable for transplantation.

More than a quarter century ago, when this move to "update" criteria for determining death began, it was met with suspicion. At that time the technology of transplant surgery was beginning to make progress, and some people suspected that the desire to establish in law a concept of brain death was motivated only by the wish to obtain organs for transplant before those organs had deteriorated (as they will rapidly when heart and lung activity fail). In truth, however, there were other reasons—apart from the desire for transplantable organs—to rethink the criteria for determining death, since one needed to decide whether a respirator was simply oxygenating a corpse or sustaining a living human being.

The suspicions may not have been entirely groundless, however—or, perhaps better, they may have been ahead of their time. For it has become clear in recent years that the thirst for transplantable organs is so strong that we are, in fact, tempted to redefine death in order to secure the "needed" organs. For example, in 1994 the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs of the American Medical Association issued an opinion holding that it is "ethically permissible" to use "the anencephalic neonate" as an organ donor, even though, as the Council recognized, under current law anencephalic babies are not dead. Anencephaly is a condition in which an infant is born with a fully or partially functioning brain stem but without any cerebral hemispheres (higher brain). These infants can never have any awareness of their own existence or of the surroundings in which they live, and they usually die within hours or days. With aggressive treatment it may on occasion be possible to sustain their life somewhat longer, but, because they are essentially dying patients, it seems better simply to give them what care and comfort we can while permitting them to die without the bodily intrusiveness of aggressive measures.

It is worth noting that as recently as 1988 the AMA's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs had concluded that it was *not* permissible to remove organs for transplantation from anencephalic infants while they were still alive, even though it is harder to maintain organs in suitable condition if one waits until the infant has sustained whole brain death. The Council's 1994 opinion is quite frankly based on a sense that it is imperative to acquire organs for transplant.

> Newborns and other young children usually can benefit from organ transplants only if the organs are taken from children of similar size. However, there is a serious shortage of pediatric organ donors. As a result, each year approximately five hundred children need heart transplants, another five hundred need liver replacements, and approximately four hundred to five hundred children in the United States need kidney transplants. With the scarcity of hearts, livers, and kidneys available for transplantation, 30 percent to 50 percent of children on the transplant waiting list die while waiting for a suitable organ. These figures are undoubtedly underestimates of the shortage of pediatric organs. With the long waiting lists for the organs, many children in need never make it onto the lists because they would not have high enough priority to receive an organ or because they do not live long enough to have

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their names entered on the waiting list.

For these reasons the Council in 1994 approved what we would ordinarily regard as wrong. Normally, an unpaired vital organ such as the heart could be taken for transplant only from a *cadaver* donor (who had previously consented or whose family had consented). But within only six years the Council reversed its earlier position and approved such "donations" from anencephalic infants—approved, we should not hesitate to say, taking the life of these infants in order to make their organs available for transplant to other children whose life prospects are better. "Permitting such organ donation," the Council suggested, "would allow some good to come from a truly tragic situation, sustaining the lives of other children and providing psychological relief for those parents who wish to give meaning to the short life of the anencephalic neonate."

It happens that in December 1995, the AMA's Council, under considerable pressure from its House of Delegates, once more reversed direction and rescinded its 1994 opinion permitting organ donation from living anencephalic infants. It did so, however, only on the ground that doubt had arisen whether all anencephalic infants lack consciousness and whether an assured diagnosis of anencephaly is always possible. If, therefore, further study demonstrates that these infants do lack consciousness and that their condition can be reliably diagnosed, the Council would have no reason not to change direction one more time and approve the use of living anencephalic infants as organ donors.

This is the sort of slippery slope on which we stand if we permit ourselves to believe that ours is the godlike responsibility of bringing good out of every human tragedy. We suppose that ours is the task of giving "meaning" to a child's life, and we permit ourselves to use the infant's death as a means of psychological relief for others. Moreover, we will gradually learn to think of ourselves and others not as living beings whose bodies have their own unity and integrity but, in Paul Ramsey's words, as "ensembles of parts . . . to be given away or taken or—worst of all—sold." We are on the way to seeing ourselves, in Ramsey's arresting phrase, as "a useful precadaver." That I do not exaggerate can be seen from recent discussions about procuring organs for transplant from what are called "non-heart-beating cadavers."

As I noted above, most organs for transplant come today from cadaver donors who have been declared brain dead but whose hearts are still beating because of mechanical assistance. Because the supply of donor organs does not meet demand, however, the search is always on for new sources of organs. At the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, a major center of transplant surgery, that search has recently focused on non-heart-beating cadaver donors. These are patients who have been declared dead by traditional cardiopulmonary criteria after they or their families have decided to forgo any further treatments. After the decision to forgo further life-sustaining treatment has been made, the still living person is taken to the operating room. There therapy is withdrawn, the patient dies on the operating table, and his organs are removed immediately after death is declared.

Objecting to this on a variety of grounds, Renée Fox, a sociologist whose pioneering studies of transplant technology are well known, has singled out as "most dreadful" what she terms "the desolate, profanely 'high tech' death that the patient/donor dies, beneath operating room lights, amidst masked, gowned, and gloved strangers, who have prepared [the] body for the eviscerating surgery that will follow." Perhaps if our noble desire to prolong life leads us to such ignoble means, we need to be sent away to learn how to shudder.

Rather than shuddering, it is of course possible to forge boldly ahead. If the Pittsburgh Protocol for obtaining organs seems almost to mock the view that unpaired vital organs should be taken only after the donor has died—to mock it, that is, by adhering to the letter but not the spirit—we might instead simply abandon the claim that it is always necessary to wait for death before procuring organs for transplant. Without recommending it, Robert Arnold and Stuart Youngner describe what this might mean.

> Machine-dependent patients could give consent for organ removal before they are dead. For example, a ventilator-dependent ALS patient could request that life support be removed at 5:00 P.M., but that at 9:00 A.M. the same day he be taken to the operating room, put under general anesthesia, and his kidneys, liver, and pancreas removed. Bleeding vessels would be tied off or cauterized. The patient's heart would not be removed and would continue to beat throughout the surgery, perfusing the other organs with warm, oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood until they were removed. The heart would stop, and the patient would be pronounced dead only after the ventilator was removed at 5:00 P.M., according to plan, and long before the patient could die from renal, hepatic, or pancreatic failure.
>
> If active euthanasia—e.g., lethal injection—and physician-assisted suicide are legally sanctioned, even more patients could couple organ donation with their planned deaths; we would not have to depend only upon persons attached to life support. This practice would yield not only more donors, but more types of organs as well, since the heart could now be removed from dying, not just dead, patients.

Arnold and Youngner do not, as I noted, claim that

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we should turn in this direction, but they view it as an honest projection of where we may gradually be headed.

In recent years we have also seen stories of children conceived *in order* to serve as bone marrow donors for family members. Increasingly, some argue that we should permit the sale and purchase of organs needed for transplant—that, in this way at least, the body may be a commodity for sale. Having set foot on the path of transplantation, we seem unable to find any exit ramp as we press toward a vision of humanity in which everyone becomes "a useful precadaver."

Can our public policy find an exit ramp? Not unless we first recover it for ourselves. The truth is, we will do almost anything to keep ourselves or our loved ones alive. Whatever we may think public policy ought to be, if our own life or our child's were at stake, we might well bend our entire energies to the task of finding an organ for transplant. Whatever could be done we would be tempted to do, and we are therefore helpless in the face of the relentless advance of this technology. Christians, who know that death is indeed an evil and the last enemy opposed to God's will for the creation, should find the temptation quite understandable.

But we also need to develop the trust and the courage that will enable us sometimes to decline to do what medical technology makes possible. There are circumstances in which we can save life—even our own or that of a loved one—only by destroying the kind of world in which we all should want to live. In learning to say no, in becoming people who give thanks for medical progress but do not worship it or place our trust in it, we may bear a different kind of life-giving witness to our world. FT

On the Public and the Private. The distinction between the private and the public realm is particularly unfortunate in a democratic society in which every private citizen has public responsibilities. The chief defect of such a distinction is that it practically eliminated justice as the mediator between love and order. It maintained order on the one hand, even if coercive, and on the other hand counselled the private citizen to suffer injustice rather than to resist it. The defects of such a system may be clearly recognized if applied to the modern race situation. The necessity of granting justice to a minority group such as the Negroes proves that concern for the neighbor must express itself in granting him justice, and not merely in preserving "law and order." The desire for justice is one form of love, not perhaps the highest form but one that cannot be despised. It may be significant that the followers of Luther were not particularly successful in creating the modern democratic societies, though after the encounter with Nazi tyranny, they have made up much lost time.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, November 1959

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The Problem With Conservatism

J. Budziszewski

My first conservative experience was in second grade, when I learned *America the Beautiful.* Verses one and two were merely baffling: I could not picture waves of grain, I could not believe that mountains were purple, and I could not form an association between liberty and pilgrim's feet. But the third verse broke me like glass and made me an idolater. *O beautiful for patriot's dream, that sees beyond the years,* we warbled; *thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears.* Somehow the song called forth in my childish heart an answering music that I had never heard in church. I seemed to hear the whine of gulls and the murmur of the sea before a white throne; I was afflicted with a sense of the Fall and a longing for the City whose light is the Glory of God. But I misidentified the City. The song sent me questing for Columbia, not the New Jerusalem. I was told to seek in the ideal futurity of my nation what cannot be made by hands.

What then is a Christian to make of conservatism? The danger, it would seem, is not in *conserving,* for anyone may have a vocation to care for precious things, but in conservative *ideology,* which sets forth a picture of these things at variance with the faith. The same is true of liberalism. From time to time Christians may find themselves in tactical alliance with conservatives, just as with liberals, over particular policies, precepts, and laws. But they cannot be in strategic alliance, because their reasons for these stands are different; they are living in a different vision. For our allies' sake as well as our own, it behooves us to remember the difference. We do not need another Social Gospel—just the Gospel.

In a previous essay, "The Problem With Liberalism" (FT, March), I described liberalism as a bundle of acute moral errors, with political consequences that grow more and more alarming as these errors are taken closer and closer to their logical conclusions. Conservatism may be described as another such bundle. The parallel is not perfect, for American culture is balanced at the top of a liberal ridge and is only now considering the descent. Because conservative moral errors have had less time to work among the powers and principalities, we cannot always discern their political consequences. But we can anticipate their fruits by their roots. The moral errors of conservatism are just as grave as those of its liberal opponents.

A minor difficulty in setting forth these errors is the ambiguity of the term "conservatism." Conservatives come in many different kinds, and their mistakes are equally heterogeneous. I should like to stress, therefore, that not every conservative commits every one of the errors that I describe in the following pages. But there is a common theme. Each kind of conservative opposes the contemporary government-driven variety of social reformism in the name of some cherished thing which he finds that it endangers. One speaks of virtue, another of wealth, another of the peace of his home and the quiet of his street—but although these pearls are of very different luster, none wishes his to be thrown before swine. So it is that conservatives are often able to make common cause, putting all their pearls in a single casket.

The first moral error of political conservatism is *civil religionism.* According to this notion America is a chosen nation, and its projects are a proper focus of religious aspiration; according to Christianity America is but one nation among many, no less loved by God, but no more.

Our civil religion seems to have developed in four stages. The first stage was the Massachusetts Bay colony. Although the Puritans accepted the orthodox view of the Church as the New Israel, they also viewed it as corrupt. The Church's role of City Upon

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a Hill had therefore passed to themselves—to the uncorrupted remnant of the faithful, fled to North American shores. Like the Israelites, they viewed themselves as having entered into a special covenant with God to be His people. The same blessings and curses, however, were appended to their covenant as to the one at Sinai; therefore, warned Governor John Winthrop, should the settlers embrace the present world and prosecute their carnal intentions, "the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us [and] be revenged of such a perjured people."

The second stage was the colonies just before the Revolution. Increasing unity among the settlers had given rise to a *national* sense of covenant with God, but the shared experience of English harassment aroused suspicion that the covenant had been breached. Isaiah's warnings to Israel were invoked by way of explanation: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." Preachers like Samuel Langdon declared that if only the people would turn from their sins, God would remit their punishment, purge the nation of wrongdoers, restore a righteous government—and deal with the English.

The third stage was in the early and middle republic. God was still understood as the underwriter of American aspirations, but as the content of these aspirations became more and more nationalistic it also became less and less Christian. It appeared that God cared at least as much about putting down the South and taking over the West as He did about making His people holy; patriotic songwriters like Samuel Francis Smith used expressions like "freedom's holy light," but they meant democracy, not freedom from sin.

The fourth stage was the late republic. By this time American culture had become not just indifferent to Christianity, but hostile to it. Conservatives still wanted to believe that the nation was specially favored by God, but the idea of seeking His will and suffering His chastening had been completely lost. President Eisenhower remarked that what the country needed was a religious foundation, but that he didn't care what it was. President Reagan applied the image of the City Upon a Hill not to the remnant of the Church in America, but to America as such—its mission not to bear witness to the gospel, but to spread the bits and pieces of its secular ideology.

The mistake in all these stages is confusing America with Zion. She is not the inheritor of the covenant, not the receiver of the promises, not the witness to the nations. It may well be that all nations have callings of sorts—specific purposes which God in His providence assigns them. But no nation can presume to take God under its wing. However we may love her, dote upon her, and regret her, the Lord our God can do without the United States.

The second moral error of political conservatism is *instrumentalism*. According to this notion faith should be used for the ends of the state; according to Christianity believers should certainly be good citizens, but faith is not a tool. To be sure, the pedigree of instrumentalism is not purely conservative; it has followers on the left as well as the right. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, wanted the state to invent a civil religion to his order and then make use of it. Its articles would be proposed "not exactly as religious dogmas" but as "sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject." Most instrumentalists, however, are not so fastidious. They are willing to make a tool of whatever religion comes to hand, whether civil, traditional, or revealed. Religious conservatives who pine for the days when jurists called America "a Christian country" and recognized Christianity as "the law of the land" are deeply in error if they think such statements expressed belief; what they expressed was instrumentalism. In those days the religion that came to hand was Christianity (or at least its counterfeit in civil religion), and the speakers were interested primarily in how it could be used. The eminent nineteenth-century jurist Thomas Cooley admitted as much. Supreme Court Justice David Brewer, controversial author of *America a Christian Country*, was only slightly less explicit.

Viewed from this perspective, the contrast between the jurisprudence of yesterday and today is not nearly as sharp as religious conservatives make it out to be. Although language describing Christianity as the law of the land has disappeared from our cases, judges and legislators are just as interested in the social utility of the faith as they were before—and just as indifferent to its truth. Consider for example the 1984 Supreme Court case *Lynch v. Donelly*, which concerned whether a Christmastime nativity display could be financed by a municipal government. Members of the Court likened erecting a creche to adopting "In God We Trust" as the national motto and opening judicial sessions with the invocation "God save the United States and this honorable Court." By the comparison, they meant three things.

These acts and declarations have nothing to do with religion. They do not "endorse" the faith, but merely "acknowledge" it, said Justice O'Connor. Indeed they have "lost through rote repetition any significant religious content," said Justice Brennan. Otherwise, they said, they would be establishments of religion, which are forbidden.

On the other hand, they are socially indispensable. They are "uniquely" suited to serve "wholly" secular purposes (Brennan) which could not reasonably be served in any other way (O'Connor). These purposes include "solemnizing public occasions" (Brennan and O'Connor), "expressing confidence in the future and encouraging the recognition of what is worthy of appreciation in society" (O'Connor), and "inspiring

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commitment to meet some national challenge in a manner that simply could not be fully served if government were limited to purely nonreligious phrases" (Brennan). The last of these purposes is especially interesting—in plain language, it means getting people to do something they would refuse to do otherwise.

In fact, they are a noble lie. Obviously, if the mottoes and creches and so forth had really lost *all* their religious content they would be completely useless for achieving any purposes whatsoever, secular or otherwise. Our rulers feel free to use them because they have lost religious meaning *for them*; they *work*, however, because they retain this meaning for the masses.

The third moral error of political conservatism is *moralism*. According to this notion God's grace needs the help of the state; Christianity merely asks the state to get out of the way. We might say that while instrumentalism wants to make faith a tool of politics, moralism wants to make politics a tool of faith; on this reading, what instrumentalism is to secular conservatives, moralism is to religious conservatives. Surprisingly, though, many religious conservatives seem unable to tell the difference. Whether someone says "We need prayer in schools to make the children holy" or "We need prayer in schools to make the country strong," it sounds to them the same.

Now I am *not* going to complain that moralism "imposes" a faith on people who do not share it. In the sense at issue, even secularists impose a faith on others—they merely impose a different faith. Every law reflects some moral idea, every moral idea reflects some fundamental commitment, and every fundamental commitment is religious—it proposes a god. Everything in the universe comes to a point. For moralism, therefore, the important distinction is not between religion and secularism, but between faiths that do and faiths that do not demand the civil enforcement of all their moral precepts.

To the question "Should the civil law enforce the precepts of the faith?" the biblical answer is, "Some yes, but some no; which ones do you mean?" The New Testament contains literally hundreds of precepts. However, Christianity is not a legislative religion. While the Bible recognizes the Torah as a divinely revealed code for the ruling of Israel before the coming of Messiah, it does not include a divinely revealed code for the ruling of the gentiles afterward. To be sure, the Bible limits the kinds of laws that Christians can *accept* from their governments, for "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). However, it does not prescribe specific laws that they must *demand* from them.

It is not even true that all of God's commands limit the kinds of laws that Christians can accept. To see this, contrast two such precepts: (1) I am prohibited from deliberately shedding innocent blood; (2) I am prohibited from divorcing a faithful spouse. Both precepts are absolute in their application to me, but that is not the issue. If we are speaking of governmental enforcement, then we are speaking of their application to others. The former precept should require very little watering down in the public square, for even nonbelievers are expected to understand the wrong of murder. That is why I may be confident in condemning the legalization of abortion. But the latter precept requires a good deal of watering down in the public square, for before the coming of Christ not even believers were expected to understand the true nature of marriage. "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard," said Jesus, "but it was not this way from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8). No doubt the Pharisees to whom He was speaking were scandalized by the idea that their civil law did not reflect God's standards fully. They must have been even more offended by the suggestion that it was not intended to. Among religious conservatives this suggestion is still a scandal, but it does not come from liberals; it comes from the Master.

Christians, then, may certainly commend a law as good or condemn it as evil. They may declare it consistent or inconsistent with the faith. But not even a good law may be simply *identified* with the faith; Christians must not speak of a tax code, marriage ordinance, or welfare policy as Christian no matter how much, or even how rightly, they desire its enactment or preservation. That predicate has been preempted by the law of God. The civil law will be Christian—if it still exists at all—only when Christ himself has returned to rule: not when a coalition of religious conservatives has got itself elected.

The fourth moral error of political conservatism is *Caesarism*. According to this notion the laws of man are higher than the laws of God; according to Christianity the laws of God are higher than the laws of man. With this error we have come back to secular conservatives. The peculiar thing about American Caesarism is that the state never *says* that its laws are higher than the laws of God; it simply refuses to acknowledge *any* laws of God, in the name of equal liberty for all religious sects.

George Reynolds, a Mormon living in Utah Territory, was charged during the 1870s with the crime of bigamy. In his defense he argued that the law was an unconstitutional infringement of his free exercise of religion. Accepting his appeal, the Supreme Court disagreed. Although it said all sorts of interesting things about why free exercise of religion is good (and why polygamy is wrong—for instance because it leads to a patriarchal rather than republican principle of authority in government), the heart of the rebuttal was a simple distinction between opinions and actions. Appealing to Thomas Jefferson's idea of a "wall of separation between church and state," it held that what people believe is the business of the

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church, but that what they do is the business of the state. Therefore, the First Amendment does not mean that people may act as their religion requires, but only that they may think as their religion requires; free exercise of religion makes no difference whatsoever to the scope of state power over conduct.

Still favored by many conservatives, this doctrine has startling implications. It means, for instance, that in throwing Christians to the lions for refusing to worship Caesar, the Romans did nothing to infringe the free exercise of Christianity; after all, while being devoured, the martyrs were still at liberty to believe that Caesar was only a man.

A century later, in cases involving other religious groups, the Court conceded the point. Announcing its discovery that faith and conduct cannot be isolated in "logic-tight compartments," it now decreed that "only those interests of the highest order and those not otherwise served can overbalance legitimate claims to the free exercise of religion." But this was too much for judicial conservatives, and the experiment was ended in 1992. Writing for the Court in *Employment Division v. Smith (II)*, Justice Scalia appealed to the notion that the issue in free exercise cases is not whether the state's motives are "compelling," but whether they are "neutral." A law that does not expressly single out a particular sect may burden any religious practice to any degree, so long as this burden is "merely the incidental effect" of the law and not its "object." In other words, repression is fine so long as it is absentminded. Pastoral care and counselling could not be forbidden *as such* but could be forbidden as an incidental effect of regulations for the licensing of mental health practitioners; the sacrament of baptism could not be forbidden *as such* but could be forbidden as an incidental effect of regulations for bathing in public places. To be sure, since the recent action of the Court, Congress has reinstated the compelling-interest doctrine, lauding its deed as a "Religious Freedom Restoration Act." But surely this is overstatement. After all, even under the compelling-interest doctrine, claims to the free exercise of religion can be swept aside whenever the state thinks its reasons are good enough. So much we would have had without a First Amendment.

As our own times have made clear, even releasing nerve gas in public places can be an exercise of religion. Perhaps the blame for our troubles lies with the Framers, for refusing to distinguish the kinds of religion whose exercise should be free from the kinds of religion whose exercise should not. But, foolishly thinking ignorance a friend of conscience, we have followed their lead. Afraid to judge among religions, we put them all beneath our feet; pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of equal liberty, we tumble headlong into Caesarism.

The fifth moral error of political conservatism is *traditionalism*. According to this notion what has been done is what should be done; Christianity, however, though it cherishes the unchanging truths of faith, insists that any merely human custom may have to be repented. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun," writes Koheleth, "the Preacher" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). "Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it?" answers God (Isaiah 43:19).

An illustration of the mischiefs of traditionalism may be found in the 1992 Supreme Court case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reaffirmed the supposed right to take the lives of one's unborn children. By inventing the right in the first place, the Court had shattered tradition; no such use of lethal violence by private individuals had ever been sanctioned in common law. But *Roe v. Wade* had stood for twenty years. As far as the Court is concerned, that makes it a new tradition—and as such, unassailable. Amazingly, the Court upheld *Roe* even while admitting that it might have been decided incorrectly. "We are satisfied," says the majority, "that the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe*'s resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded the ruling."

Just how does an unsound precedent have force? The answer, says the Court, is that "for two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized their intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail. . . . An entire generation has come of age free to assume *Roe*'s concept of liberty." To put the idea more simply, sex has been separated from responsibility for resulting children for so long that to change the rules on people now would be unfair. Therefore, never mind whether what was done was right; what matters is that it was done.

Moral errors gain their plausibility from the truths that they distort. It is certainly true that precedents, traditions, and customs should not be needlessly disturbed; the gain in goodness from a particular change must always be balanced against the harm of change as such. But this truth applies to the choice between a good law and a still better one, not to the choice between a good law and an evil one. The question to ask about moral evil is not whether we have got used to it, but whether it can be stopped.

The sixth moral error of political conservatism is *neutralism*. This may come as a surprise, because neutralism also comes in a liberal variety. Whereas the liberal sort of neutralist exclaims, "Let a thousand flowers bloom," the conservative sort cries merely, "Leave me alone." In essence, conservative neutralism is the notion that because everyone ought to mind his own business, moral and religious judg-

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ments should be avoided. By contrast, while agreeing that one ought to mind his own business—St. Paul warns three times against busybodies—Christianity holds that moral and religious judgments can never be avoided. They must be straight and true before people can even agree as to what their business is.

Not everyone reaches neutralism by the same route, but conservative thinker Michael Oakeshott follows a well-worn path in deriving it from traditionalism. Conservatives, he says, seek activities whose enjoyment springs "not from the success of the enterprise, but from the familiarity of the engagement." What makes this disposition intelligible in politics is "the observation of our current manner of living" together with the belief that laws are "instruments enabling people to pursue activities of their own choice with minimum frustration." But to say this is to reject the view that laws are "plans for imposing substantive activities"; therefore, he holds, conservatism has "nothing to do" with morals or religion.

Of course the conclusion does not follow, and if it were really true then conservatives could make no decisions at all. Rather than being indifferent to questions of good and evil, Oakeshott himself maintains the good of minimizing frustration, and rather than holding no opinion about religion, he holds the opinion that it is better to be ignorant of truth than to be pestered about it. For example he says that people of conservative disposition "might even be prepared to suffer a legally established ecclesiastical order," but "it would not be because they believed it to represent some unassailable religious truth, but merely because it restrained the indecent competition of sects and (as Hume said) moderated 'the plague of a too diligent clergy.'" The difficulty is plain: If not by his own moral and religious standards, then how does Oakeshott know that competition is indecent and diligence a plague? Why not condemn complacency and sloth instead?

Not even rules designed to tell what counts as pestering can work in a neutral way. Always we must add others to make them work—and what we add makes a difference to the outcome. Christianity recognizes this. For example, consider the principles of Subsidiarity and Sphere Sovereignty. Each targets the problem of knowing where the business of one party ends and the business of another begins. Subsidiarity, a precept of Catholic social thought, holds that greater and higher social institutions like the state exist just to *help* lesser and subordinate ones like the family. Therefore, to destroy the lesser institutions, absorb them, or take away their proper functions is "gravely wrong" and a "disturbance of right order." Sphere subsidiarity is more prominent in Protestant social thought. Ordering social institutions horizontally instead of vertically, it says that each has its own domain, its own authority, and its own ruling norm, for instance love in the case of the family and public justice in the case of the state. Therefore, each should be protected from interference by the others.

Both rules are meant to deal with meddling, but applying either one requires a vast amount of other knowledge, which one must get from somewhere else—just what the neutralist would like to think unnecessary. To test my college students I used to ask, "To which institution would a subsidiarist give the task of instructing children in sexual mores—state or family?" Almost all replied, "The state." Families need *help*, they argued, because they do a poor job in this area: They rarely teach children about contraception, sexual preferences, or the many other things which young moderns need to know. I was astonished. Couldn't my students tell the difference between helping the family and absorbing its functions? On reflection their answer was not astonishing at all. They shared neither Christian presuppositions about what sex is for nor Christian presuppositions about how a family works; why then should they have reached Christian conclusions in applying Christian social principles?

There is nothing exceptional about the principles of Subsidiarity and Sphere Sovereignty; no definition of meddling or intrusion can work in a neutral way. Particular moral and religious understandings are always presupposed, and changing them changes the way our definitions work. It follows that forbidding moral judgments will not keep busybodies out of other people's hair. Somehow they must learn the meanings of "other," "people's," and "hair."

The seventh moral error of political conservatism is *mammonism*. According to this notion wealth is the object of commonwealth, and its continual increase even better; according to Christianity wealth is a snare, and its continual increase even worse. Mammonism is what the Big Tent that some political analysts urge for the Republican Party is all about: ditch the social issues, but hold onto the capitals gains tax reduction. To keep your liberty you have to keep your money.

Christians, of course, are not the only ones to have criticized mammonism. Warnings against the love of wealth were a staple even of ancient pagan conservatism. The idea was that virtue makes republics prosper, but prosperity leads to love of wealth, love of wealth leads to loss of virtue, and loss of virtue makes republics fall. Thus if you want your republic to endure, you will do well to seek a site unfavorable to great prosperity—not too warm, not too fertile, not too close to the trading routes. That our secular conservatives disagree with their ancient counterparts will strike no one as a new idea. Odder is the ease with which modern Christians make their peace with mammonism.

An extreme example is found in the late-nineteenth-century Baptist preacher Russell Conwell, who maintained that to make money is the same

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thing as to preach the Christian gospel. However that may be, to preach his own gospel was certainly the same thing as to make money. So eager were people to hear his oft-repeated *Acres of Diamonds* speech that he is said to have earned, over a period of years, perhaps six million dollars from speakers' fees alone. Though peanuts by the standards of modern televangelists, at the time that was real money. An inventory of Conwell's more astonishing claims would include at least the following: (1) It is your Christian duty to get rich, and ownership of possessions makes you a better person; (2) The overwhelming majority of rich people are morally upright, and that is exactly why they are rich; (3) It is wrong to be poor, and God does not approve of poor people. That Jesus explicitly contradicts each of these claims (Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 19:23-24, Luke 6:20) leaves Conwell cold.

A more temperate but still objectionable form of mammonism is found in *Toward the Future*, a "lay letter" published in 1984 by a committee of prominent Catholic conservatives. Jesus told the story of a master who entrusts his servants with the care of his money while he is traveling to a distant place to receive a kingship. Upon his return, he finds that one servant has buried his share while the other two have made investments. The timid servant he scolds and dismisses, but the bold ones he praises and rewards with yet greater responsibilities. Traditionally the Church has understood this parable to mean that just as a king in this world expects his agents to take risks, not burying his money but investing it to earn a return, so God expects his people to take risks, not burying their gifts but using them to build up the Kingdom of Heaven. By contrast, the lay letter understands it to mean simply that God expects his people to invest their money to earn a return. "Preserving capital is not enough," the authors teach; "it must be made to grow." The use of gifts for the sake of the Kingdom becomes the growth of wealth for the sake of wealth.

To be sure, the lay letter's defense of enterprise is not altogether wrong. Material things are not intrinsically evil, it is not a sin to engage in honest business, and, despite its dubious motivational underpinnings, the capitalist type of economy may well be superior to the alternatives. Indeed the cooperative sort of socialism seems to ignore the circumstance of the Fall, and the compulsory sort cannot even be established without the sin of theft. In a fallen world, much can also be said for the "invisible hand" of the market, by which independent individuals, even though selfish, bring about a social good which was no part of their intention. But even Adam Smith recognizes that the invisible hand does not work unless laborers and businessmen submit themselves to the restraints of justice, and that an interest in wealth alone will not induce them to do so. After all, if winning is all that matters, why keep the competition going at all? Why not use one's wealth to wring special privileges from the government and so become more wealthy still? Capitalism depends on a moral spirit which it cannot supply and may even weaken; it is, in the most exact of senses, a parasite on the faith. But a Christian parasite is not by that fact Christian.

The eighth moral error of political conservatism is *meritism*. According to this notion I should do unto others as they deserve. With the addition of mammonism, matters become even simpler, for then those who need help are by definition undeserving, while those in a position to help are by definition deserving. That meritism is not a Christian doctrine comes as a surprise to many people. Large numbers think the meritist motto "God helps those who help themselves" is a quotation from the Bible. What the New Testament actually teaches is that in what we need most, we are helpless; the grace of God is an undeserved gift. According to Christianity I should do unto others not as they deserve, but as they need.

Aristotle taught that vices tend to come in pairs, because one can miss a mark either by way of excess or by way of deficiency—by going too far or by failing to go far enough. That is certainly the case here, for the conservative mistake of meritism stands opposite to the liberal mistake of propitiationism—doing unto others as they *want*. In fact the commonest way to fall into either mistake is by sheer recoil from the other. The reason is easy to see: We tend to think of justice and mercy as antithetical, so that to practice either I must slight the other. By this line of reasoning the conservative emphasis on desert is a preference for justice, while the liberal emphasis on desire is a preference for mercy. By contrast, in the Christian account of things justice and mercy are corollaries that must be united. They are united in the Atonement because God neither waived the just penalty for our sins nor inflicted it on us, but took it upon Himself. This staggering gift also teaches what the unity of justice and mercy requires: sacrifice. If to us justice and mercy seem irreconcilable, the reason is probably that we are loath to pay the price of their reconciliation; we are afraid of sacrifice and shrink from the way of the Cross.

What does the contrast between meritism and charity look like in ordinary human relationships? Consider the governmental policy of paying women cash prizes for bearing children out of wedlock. Liberals want to continue the policy because they cannot tell need from desire. Meritists propose ending it because the subsidies are undeserved. Although a Christian may accept the cutoff, he cannot accept it for the reason given. All of us at all times need and receive many things that we do not deserve. The problem with the subsidies is that they are *not* what is needed. They so completely split behavior from its natural consequences that they infantilize their supposed

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beneficiaries; to infantilize them is to debase them, and no one needs to be debased.

Very well, says the meritist to the Christian, but we both support a cutoff. The rationales differ, but so what? That makes no difference in practice, does it? But it does. After achieving the cutoff, the meritist thinks his work is done, but the Christian thinks his work has only begun. He must now find another way to offer help; and he had better be prepared to pay the price. For a portrait of that price, don't think of a bureaucrat, think of Mother Teresa.

We have considered what Christians are to make of political conservatism. It might also be asked what political conservatives are to make of Christians. I am afraid that the more faithful we are to our identity in Christ, the less reliable they will find us even as occasional allies; and we must be honest with them. The Christian thinker Michael Novak wrote in his 1969 book *A Theology for Radical Politics* that because God is the source of all truth and good, whatever is true and good is Christian. At that time finding truth and goodness on the left, he therefore baptized the left. Like many Christians of the time, what he forgot was that in order to identify the true and the good, one must have a standard. "Every explanation of the meaning of human existence," said Reinhold Niebuhr, "must avail itself of some principle of explanation which cannot be explained. Every estimate of values involves some criterion of value which cannot be arrived at empirically." By the time he wrote *Confessions of a Catholic*, fourteen years later, Novak had arrived at the same insight. As he explained, his former self had erred in taking his principle of explanation and criterion of value from a worldly faction instead of the community of faith. The "reference group" of Christian activists like himself had somehow become "others on the left"; it should have been others in the Lord.

To repeat the error would be a shame, for the reference group of Christians can no more be others on the right than others on the left. Citizenship is an obligation of the faith, therefore the Christian will not abstain from the politics of the nation-state. But his primary mode of politics must always be *witness*. It is a good and necessary thing to change the welfare laws, but better yet to go out and feed the poor. It is a good and necessary thing to ban abortion, but better yet to sustain young women and their babies by taking them into the fellowship of faith. This is the way the kingdom of God is built.

It is not by the world that the world is moved—yet how it pulls. Ah, God, help us let go of the heights and the depths, the thrones and dominions, the powers and principalities; to be not conservatives, nor yet liberals, but simply Christians. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." FT

ON BIBLICAL FAITH. A genuinely biblical faith must be preached because it alone can answer the need of the human heart and penetrate through all the pitiful pretenses which men practice in the name of both religion and irreligion. But it might be added that such a faith can render a greater service to "democracy" than either alternative faith. For in the one case democracy is denied because a church, which claims a monopoly on the "oracles" of God, can not enter fully into the give and take of a democratic society. In the other case a faith makes democracy or freedom or even some lesser value the final end; and destroys democracy by self-worship. A democracy which believes only that all men should have the right to believe anything or nothing is on the road to becoming a culturally empty association of empty individuals.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Society*, Spring 1948

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Books In Review

Madison's Madison

The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic. By Lance Banning. *Cornell University Press. 543 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Gary Rosen**

For students of the early American republic, James Madison has long been something of a riddle. No one disputes, of course, his vital contributions to the establishment of the Constitution. A leading critic of the Articles of Confederation, the feckless league under which Americans were governed for much of the 1780s, Madison was among the first to contemplate a more far-reaching union, one that would attend more energetically to national needs while offering a measure of security to those who had suffered at the hands of local majorities. He would go on to become the most influential member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, coauthor of *The Federalist*, the classic defense of that gathering's handiwork, and the primary sponsor of the Bill of Rights (which he viewed as a harmless palliative for such foes of the new regime as still remained). Here, then, we have the familiar Madison—nationalist, centralizer, wary observer of the states.

But what of the less familiar Madison, the one who emerged shortly thereafter? As most historians would have it, the Virginian underwent a radical transformation in the early 1790s, renouncing his expansive nationalism and embracing a doctrine of states' rights and strict constitutional construction. On this account, the caliber of his thought declined as well. The "Father of the Constitution," the brilliant theorist of the extended republic, became a derivative thinker, a man defined less by his own views than by those of the period's great political antagonists, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Though once a Hamiltonian, the story goes, Madison fell under Jefferson's spell, helped along by his own political ambitions and the narrow interests of the Old Dominion.

In his splendid new book, Lance Banning tries to make sense of this apparent reversal. I say "apparent" because he rightfully wonders if the orthodoxy on Madison is correct. Rather than solve the historical problem, Banning wishes to challenge its major premise. As he sees it, Madison's activities, especially during the decisive years of constitutional reform, have been widely misunderstood—resulting in accounts of the founder's political thought that would have "pained and puzzled" him. Banning believes that the Madison who helped Jefferson establish the Republican Party was the same one, by and large, who fought for the Virginia Plan at the Constitutional Convention and who joined with Hamilton (and John Jay) in writing *The Federalist*. He argues, in short, for what Madison long proclaimed: his own consistency.

Banning chides his fellow historians for allowing Hamilton to set the terms of the debate between himself and Madison. As the first Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton was taken aback, we know, to find his one-time ally leading the opposition to his financial program and condemning his interpretation of the Constitution. After all, he wrote at the time, their political views had once proceeded from "the same point of departure." According to Banning, modern analysts have accepted this assumption far too readily and have thus incorporated a Hamiltonian "bias" into their inquiries:

> They presuppose that a broad construction of the Constitution had been general among the Federalists of 1788, that Madison's resistance to Hamilton's own conception of the scope of federal powers *must* have meant a change of attitude about the document itself, and that the balance of authority between the central government and the states was unmistakably the most important issue of these years.

On all counts, Banning convincingly argues, the unwitting academic followers of Hamilton have gotten it wrong.

Madison was never a nationalist of the Hamiltonian stripe. Even while decrying the baneful influence of the states on national affairs and their sometimes oppressive internal policies, he assumed that they would retain considerable authority. He had no dreams of empire or national glory, the ends proclaimed by Hamilton in his effort to shift power and allegiance to the political center. For Madison, such designs were dangerously anti-republican, making it far more difficult for the people to maintain a vigilant watch over their governors. As Banning reminds us, Madison's fear of abusive local majorities was always accompanied by "a profound commitment to effective popular control" and "a lively fear of distant, independent rulers."

Likewise, Madison was always a stickler for written constitutions. As a member of the Continental Congress, he had repeatedly stopped short when convinced that the legislature lacked a given power under the Articles of Confederation. In Virginia, he had defended religious liberty both as a natural right and as the solemn guarantee of a state constitution that set the "metes and bounds" of public authority. For Madison, the social compact was a serious matter: if government was to be legitimate, it had to respect the limits laid down by the popular sovereign. When Hamilton tried to justify his ambitious economic program through a liberal reading of the Constitution's "necessary and proper" clause and by appealing to the transparently rhetorical "general welfare" of the eighth section of Ar-

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ticle I, Madison's resistance might have been predicted. Such rules of interpretation amounted to an unlimited government, and that is not what the people had ratified.

One of the great merits of Banning's meticulous work is to show the divisions that existed among Federalists even as they came together in the movement for a new Constitution. While all of them wanted to invigorate and extend the powers of the federal government, they differed over the wider aims of the American experiment. Hamilton was no republican, as he openly declared at Philadelphia. An admirer of the British regime, he considered popular rule both a threat to individual rights and an obstacle to imperial greatness. He administered the new government accordingly, much on the model of the British prime ministers whom he so admired. For him, the key to the young nation's political success lay not in the fickle and uninformed opinion of the many, but rather in the steady and prudent interests of the few, those whose loyalty could be secured by the offices and emoluments made possible by a generous view of the Constitution's powers.

Madison's politics indeed had a different "point of departure." Like Hamilton, he was deeply devoted to the cause of individual rights. He doubted, however, that it was possible to find a more reliable guardian for such rights than the people themselves. Great Britain's mixed regime, for all of its vaunted moderation, hardly seemed an appropriate model for Americans so recently liberated from its tyrannical rule. To the contrary, as Madison saw it, the Revolution had been fought to defend the then-controversial view that *popular* government could rise to the standard of *good* government. Like Martin Diamond before him, Banning stresses Madison's abiding confidence in this proposition. While republicanism had its vices, the remedies for them must be republican as well.

IF Banning's account has a shortcoming, it is in his effort to explain this two-fold commitment to the "sacred fire of liberty," the Madisonian phrase that provides the book's title. For Madison, liberty was both civil and political: it referred, on the one hand, to the basic priorities of liberalism—security, prosperity, peace—and, on the other, to the republican ideal of self-government. As Banning would have it, the liberal dimension of his thought has been emphasized to the neglect of his republicanism. Though undoubtedly a disciple of John Locke and his teaching on the social compact, Madison was also indebted to a much older tradition, one reaching back to ancient Greece and Rome by way of writers like James Harrington and Algernon Sidney. On this view, Madison's thought was at once both modern and "neoclassical."

Such arguments are the hallmark of the "ideological" school of early American historiography, of which Banning is a prominent (if sometimes dissenting) member. Now the dominant approach to study of the founding era, its many able advocates—Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, J. G. A. Pocock, Drew McCoy—maintain that the period was profoundly shaped by the long history of republican "civic humanism." The aim of these scholars is revisionist. By showing the continuing hold of such ideas on the revolutionaries of '76, and on figures like Jefferson and Madison, they hope to consign Locke to the margins of American political thought. On this retelling, our eighteenth-century forebears appear in a new light: once considered selfish liberal brutes, intent on their rights and interests, they are transformed into virtuous citizens, single-minded in their dedication to the common good.

Banning is easily the most sober of this group, and he has resisted the (altogether incredible) effort to erase liberalism from our early history. He knows that the fundamentals of the social compact—the state of nature, the motive of self-preservation, the origin of government in consent—are too central to the thought of the period to be ignored. Moreover, he has qualified his republican claims: hence Madison's support of popular government is only "*neo*classical." As he recognizes, the political science of the founders—with its representatives, checks and balances, and notion of limited government—is hard to reconcile with Spartan gruel and Roman censorship.

Still, Banning does not give serious enough consideration to the possibility that Madison's republicanism arises from his liberalism, that it is an instrument rather than an end in itself. Recall, for instance, that in *Federalist* Number 39, Madison matter-of-factly states that "no other form would be reconcilable with the genius of the people of America," as though his attachment to popular government were simply a bow to national prejudice. In Number 51, he goes still farther in suggesting the mere expedience of republicanism, comparing it to hereditary rule as a "method" for preventing injustice. Having rejected the "precarious security" provided by "a will in the community independent of the majority," America would give the extended republic a try. Perhaps *this* "method" would work.

Rationales of this sort for Madison's republicanism are useful reminders of the liberal priorities that he would not allow to be compromised. In the end, though, they cannot fully account for his insistence on popular government. As he goes on to say in *Federalist* Number 39, the republican form is also demanded by "that honorable determination, which animates every votary of freedom, to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government." For Madison, republicanism might not be the only way to secure the rights and interests of compacting individuals, but it was certainly one of unrivaled dignity.

Here Banning is right to detect something of the proud, spirited ethos of the classical republic, but he fails to see how it has been appropriated and changed by liberalism. Like the other historians of his school, he can only conceive of liberalism as a stark world of possessive individuals, utterly indifferent to

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public things. Thus, when Madison speaks of virtue, he necessarily ceases to be a liberal. The premise is mistaken, however. Though liberalism does not take the cultivation of virtue to be its end—this being its chief departure from premodern political thought—it does not dispense with it altogether. It redefines virtue to serve its own purposes, both private and public.

In an article of his own that he cites at several points in the book, Banning seems to recognize as much. Conceding his "second thoughts" about how virtue has been treated by his colleagues, he rejects their facile equation of the concept with complete self-sacrifice in the name of the public good. Eighteenth-century Americans simply did not think that way. They were people very much aware of their interests and their private concerns. Their standards of public character were considerably more modest, more bourgeois. As Banning reports, they expected a citizen to be "vigilant," "assertive," "self-reliant," "independent." What are these, one might ask, if not the virtues of a decidedly liberal republican?

The Byzantine World of Religious Jurisprudence

Securing Religious Liberty: Principles for Judicial Interpretation of the Religion Clauses. By Jesse H. Choper. *University of Chicago Press. 198 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **William Bentley Ball**

The author, one of the nation's major constitutional scholars, has made an offer to the Supreme Court which he thinks it can't refuse—or at least shouldn't. It is a set of four principles, elaborately stated, that he calls "a comprehensive thesis for adjudication of all significant issues that arise under the Religion Clauses of the Constitution." An immodest claim? Hardly. No one can look at the confusing mass of inventions heaped upon those clauses by the Supreme Court over the past half century and not applaud Professor Choper's sedulous effort to straighten things out and to devise rational guidelines for future adjudication.

Initially, the book is useful simply as an overview of the corpus of our religious liberty jurisprudence. Every important decision of the Supreme Court in that field is at least touched upon. That should be of value to those unacquainted with the field, including judges facing a

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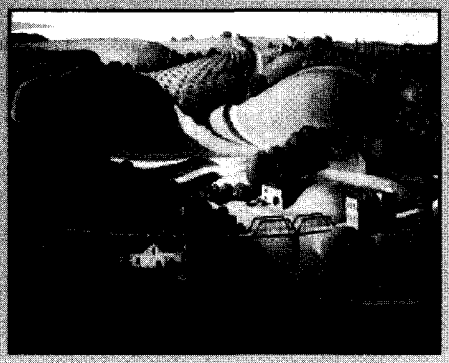
Creation at Risk?

Religion, Science, and Environmentalism

EDITED BY Michael Cromartie



The environmental movement both echoes and challenges traditional Judeo-Christian views about humankind's proper relationship to the natural world. Ten scholars and activists here explore — and clash over — some of the scientific, religious, moral, philosophical, economic, and political claims advanced by contemporary environmentalists.

Among the topics they examine critically are the theological implications of biocentrism, global warming, the Rio Treaty, and the use of failed computer forecasts of temperature changes as the basis for public policy; "green totalitarianism" and the global-management perspective of environmentalists; and the relative merits of governments and markets in dealing with ecological problems.

Contributors: Ronald Bailey, Thomas Sieger Derr, Gregg Easterbrook, Christopher Flavin, Peter J. Hill, Andrew Kimbrell, Patrick J. Michaels, James A. Nash, Charles T. Rubin, and Andrew Steer

ISBN 0-8028-4104-X • 176 pages • Paperback • $15.00

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5520 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

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Religion Clause case for the first time. For all judges, Choper's four principles constitute a virtual code, a sort of check-off list, by which cases are to be decided. Here, for example, is his second principle, the "Burdensome Effect Principle":

> If government regulations of conduct that are generally applicable and enacted for secular/neutral purposes (i.e., without intent to provide an advantage to religious interests or prejudice individuals because of their religious beliefs) conflict with action or inaction pursuant to the tenets of a particular religion, the Free Exercise Clause should be held to require an exemption under the following circumstances: the claimant has suffered cognizable injury; the exemption does not violate the Establishment Clause; the exemption does not require the government to abandon its entire regulatory program; the individual's beliefs are sincerely held; violation of those beliefs entails extratemporal consequences; an alternative burden is imposed if one exists that does not conflict with the religious objector's beliefs; and the government cannot demonstrate that denial of the exemption is necessary to a compelling interest.

"Byzantine!" you exclaim. But that text merely shows how complex Religion Clause questions can be when they are deeply and sincerely pondered. This, and Choper's three other principles, are well worth pondering, but to me the chief value of *Securing Religious Liberty* lies in the exegesis he provides for each of them. In the short space of this review, I can only point to conclusions on some highly important and timely issues that result, in this book, from Choper's interpretations of his own interpretations.

GOVERNMENTAL financial aid that may benefit religious interests, Choper holds, violates the Establishment Clause unless it has "an independent secular impact" and poses no "meaningful danger to religious liberty." What is surprising here is the author's apparent view that aid to individuals in religious institutions is perforce aid to the institutions. Thus he says that the GI Bill of Rights violated his "independent secular impact" principle and that voucher programs would, too. So he ignores the latest and best teaching of the Supreme Court in the 1986 *Witters* (aid to blind student) and 1993 *Zobrest* (aid to deaf child) cases that an individual, not a sectarian school, may be the real beneficiary of the aid, and that, therefore, no Establishment Clause problem arises.

Yet, surprisingly, Choper does hold that such a school may be directly aided. Recognizing as he does that the typical religious school serves both sacred and secular ends, all he finds needed is a way to measure the aid so that the public funds will be used solely for the latter ends. He explores various ways for allocating the aid. He rejects the idea that standardized test results will prove the amount of secular knowledge the child in a religious school receives. He says, instead, "using time spent (on instruction in secular subject matter) is the basic criterion." His rejection of standardized tests (e.g., the Stanford Achievement Test) is as puzzling as his acceptance of digital computation of secular versus religious instructional content. Choper recognizes the important role of the religious school but seems influenced by the literature of leading church-state separationists of the 1960s, with their lurid caricatures of the permeating religiosity of Catholic schools. His heeding of that literature causes him to miss the big point of the 1990s: that new constitutional scholarship sustains the growing number of parents who find their rights affronted by absolutist views of church-state separation that would bar them from economic freedom of educational choice.

On religious liberty generally, however, Choper attacks the Supreme Court's 1990 decision in the *Smith* case, which held that government can injure religious interests so long as its action is "religiously neutral" and of "general application." Choper rightly says this rule permits "government intrusion into too wide a range of areas of religious life." He therefore strongly endorses the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which effectively overrules *Smith*, but warns that the Act affords only "temporary protection" for religious liberty and is subject to elimination at any time by Congress. But it is fully possible that its elimination may instead take place at the hands of the Supreme Court. In March 1995 a federal district court in Texas held the RFRA as lying outside the constitutional power of Congress to enact. Echoing across the centuries in the court's opinion was the statement of Chief Justice John Marshall in 1803 that "It is especially the province of the judicial department [not the Con-

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gress] to say what the law is." Choper had completed his book just prior to the Texas federal court's decision.

Good, too, are Choper's trenchant criticisms of absurdities solemnly expressed as constitutional doctrine by various members of the Court in the past. He attacks, for example, the declaration of the Supreme Court in the *Lemon* case that political division along religious lines is an evil against which the First Amendment was designed to protect us. Again, he takes apart, as patently unreasonable, the view of Justice O'Connor that violations of the Establishment Clause should depend upon whether a mythical "reasonable observer" would perceive particular governmental action as an endorsement of religion.

If Choper were on the Supreme Court today, his four "principles" would find him in conflict with some major prior decisions of the Court. He says that "the existing state of governing legal standards is both greatly in flux and riddled with major defects and inconsistencies." So bad is this condition that he would see the principle of *stare decisis*, imposed in the religion field, as damaging to the good of our society. Choper would also find unconstitutional public school programs allowing children to attend religious instruction off the public school premises. He would allow posting, at private expense, of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms and the teaching, in those classrooms, of creation science if based on a fair and balanced presentation of the scientific evidence. He would see no violation of the Constitution in allowance of an opportunity for public school children to engage in silent prayers. Justice Choper would find no offense to the Constitution in public displays by private groups of menorahs and creches on religious holidays. He would have difficulty with the tax exemption of church properties but would hope that his principle of general restriction on financial assistance to religion is "flexible enough" to allow such exemption.

What about that all-important question of the definition of "religion," as used in the First Amendment? Oddly, Choper considers the manifestation of nonbelief to be protected by the Religion Clause, though he acknowledges that it is already thoroughly protected by the First Amendment's protection of speech, press, assembly, and petition. He is sensitive to the dangers of governmentally imposed secularism, recognizing, at one point, that many citizens "feel that their taxes are being used to subsidize an alien dogma of secularism." But, like many another constitutional scholar, he never really comes to grips with the implications of the Supreme Court's 1961 *Torcaso* decision. There the Court held Secular Humanism (capitalization by the Court), along with Ethical Culture, to be a "religion" within the meaning of the First Amendment. And long before, in 1947, Justice Rutledge had rightly pointed out that "religion" means the same thing in the Amendment's Establishment Clause as it does in its Free Exercise

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Clause. Choper, however, does not seize the opportunity to explore the important question of whether the widespread imposition in the public schools today of secular humanist programs does not offend the Establishment Clause even more markedly than would the twenty-two-word nondenominational prayer the Court struck down in 1962.

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Ben Bradlee's Version

A GOOD LIFE: NEWSPAPERING AND OTHER ADVENTURES. By BEN BRADLEE. *Simon & Schuster. 514 pp. $27.50.*

***Reviewed by* C. John Sommerville**

BEN BRADLEE, celebrity editor at the *Washington Post*, has a lot to answer for. And I don't mean for bringing down Nixon's presidency, for which he modestly disclaims credit (saying that Nixon destroyed Nixon). I mean for his part in making journalism so glamorous and exciting that—like a bad currency—daily and hourly news is driving the more substantial elements of our culture to the margins. Bradlee himself frequently expresses uneasiness about this, and about the "celebrification" of journalists, but doesn't seem to understand what it means or what could be done about it.

The advantage in our "culture wars" is obviously held by the forces of "change," which hardly feel the need for justification, however mindless or pointless the change may seem. And thoughtful people understand that the mass media—and specifically the element of dailiness—have something vitally important to do with this. A society once bound together by a shared culture is now held together—or prodded along—by an information media that fragment reality for the sake of profits. Ben Bradlee was perhaps the single most important person in this development, and would accept a certain amount of credit. He is still sufficiently old-fashioned to think that the dangers from journalism are those of bias and inaccuracy, and justifies himself in those terms. The real danger, however, comes from a news consciousness that, rather than direct our attention to anything significant, seeks merely to give our minds a forward spin.

One hates to be critical of a man who is such good company in this memoir, admitting to errors, embarrassments, fears, and disappointments, as well as including us in his many triumphs. He is not settling old scores or correcting the record in his favor or proving his foresight. He even tones down his famous profanity (comparable only to Nixon's, he has been told) although he remains a salty old pirate. But he almost invites us to use this very personal memoir as a parable of America's development since 1945. And when we do, we are led to some disturbing reflections.

BRADLEE had a conventional Boston Episcopalian upbringing, complete with private school, athletics, girls (or as he likes to put it, "getting laid"), and some mild carousing. Religious training shows through his prose at several points. Early on, he rejected an ancestral Republicanism, thinking it simply a lack of independent thought, but can still admit having enjoyed breaking the labor unions' grip on his paper. Essentially, he is a man of action rather than reflection, not entering his business in order to push an agenda but more to stir things up. Or one might say that Bradlee was more of an iconoclast than a radical, assuming the economic and bureaucratic structure while churning over our politics and culture.

A Harvard education did not concentrate Bradlee's mind as much as his stint in the wartime Navy, and he came out wanting to find a job "that would really make a difference." The options were teaching or journalism, and it didn't take him long to decide which was more likely to decide "the battles of history."

After a temporary job with the ACLU, Bradlee helped launch a small newspaper in New Hampshire and began dreaming of "putting politicians in jail." When the paper failed, however, he used his French to land a press attache's job at the U.S. embassy in Paris—a hint of the growing symbiosis of government and press, rather than that boasted confrontationalism.

Switching jobs to *Newsweek*'s Paris bureau, Bradlee noticed that his wartime marriage was going under, partly because he was so consumed with his work. In the breaking up of families—his own and others—there is a certain amount of talk about guilt, or guilt feelings. But as he admits, newsmen—at least those in the stratosphere of the profession—don't really have a family life. Bradlee then marks the point at which he was able to break out of his "Puritan legacies about sex and joy," and how "the world looked differently to me ever since."

Newsweek allowed Bradlee to move back to Washington, "the sleepy southern town that World War II had made the capital of the free world." It suited him down to the ground. David Halberstam once described Bradlee as a man without an attention span in a town without an attention span. There is nothing in this memoir to suggest that Bradlee was distressed at Washington's lack of ideas or ideals. He does not articulate a political purpose (much less a program) behind his activities, except that the news industry should keep the process open and honest. Any hint of deception energizes him.

For example, there was Joseph McCarthy. Like others, Bradlee credits the press with having brought him down. Actually, of course, the press built McCarthy up, and Bradlee unwittingly adds to the evidence of how the Senator's campaign ballooned with the press' eager attention. It was the Senate that brought him down. Something

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a little different would happen to LBJ and Nixon, as fear of the new journalism drove them to acts we all regret.

John Kennedy was a different matter. As Bradlee says, he spoke the same language as journalists, which essentially meant viewing politics as sport. As it happened, Kennedy also moved in next to Bradlee in Georgetown, and their families became as thick as thieves. Jackie used to complain that the couples never had meaningful conversations, since the men were only interested in political gossip. Bradlee would take some flak later when he turned his memories of JFK into a book. And to someone so sensitive to hypocrisy it was a serious shock to discover that JFK deceived him regarding his affair with Bradlee's sister-in-law. At the time, Kennedy's "openness" with the press had convinced Bradlee that journalists did not have to check up on him as they did those politicians who seemed "holier than thou."

Bradlee was disappointed that *Newsweek* wasn't making more of its opportunities for making an "impact." His first major move was to get Phil Graham, owner of the *Washington Post*, to buy the magazine, and his next move was to jump to the *Post* after Graham's suicide. His goal at the *Post* was to catch the *New York Times*, and that was to be done by "creating a sense of excitement."

Events would soon play into Bradlee's hands. With the Vietnam War came the Pentagon Papers episode, which is the most revealing episode in this book. In a gripping account Bradlee shows how close he came, as managing editor, to wrecking the paper on the legal and financial rocks for a goal—scooping the competition—that would strike most of us as trivial. Bradlee cannot have thought that the story told in the Pentagon Papers would not come out within a matter of weeks, but he could not stand to think that the *Times* would be talked about while the *Post* stood by and read about it. Being the center of attention was the point, and for that he was willing to risk a good deal of the Grahams' money. It worked; the *Post* moved into the upper echelon. To someone not in the news business, Bradlee's accounts of the frantic activity that supports five deadlines a day and the lengths that papers will go to in order to scoop rivals by a few hours will seem curious. Until one reflects on the centrality of profits to the news industry—a topic that never arises in Bradlee's account.

Bradlee does not make a lot of how the news brought an end to the Vietnam War, which was, after all, our longest war. He is waiting to get to Watergate, which was the *Post*'s finest hour. The story told here adds nothing to the accounts of others, which all attest to Bradlee's steadiness, courage, and sound judgment in that sometimes frightening scene. Granted, the *Post* learned of Watergate only after the courts were onto the case, and the lawyers and detectives for the Democratic Party, FBI, Federal judiciary, and congressional committees tend to be forgotten. The movie about the scandal was not about them but about the journalists, to Bradlee's embarrassed delight.

The aftermath of Watergate was hard on Bradlee. He had created a high-performance craft—the envy of his journalistic peers—that now found itself in the shallows. He had some hopes of Irangate, but was disappointed to find that the country couldn't get excited about it. There was also some chagrin as he learned more about JFK. Those who have read *Conversations with Kennedy* will be surprised to find how much less Bradlee now sees in the man. As he admits, "the truth about Kennedy, like all truths, emerges slowly." It is enough to make one question his fa-

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vorite quote from Phil Graham, that news is the first draft of history. So many first drafts end up in the wastebasket.

Bradlee has had to confront other unwelcome facts about his business. He can sometimes be brought to admit that "I am less sure today . . . that the public is best served by knowing everything the second an incident happens." He takes credit for using discernment in deciding what to print and what to withhold, but worries that some editors don't show such moderation.

IT IS ODD that Bradlee never blames the press itself for the growth of the celebrity culture that he laments. And yet he frankly admits that his constant goal was to have his paper talked about. Stories were important if they "grabbed the town by the throat." He is vastly enjoying his own celebrity, by this account, but can't help worrying over the frantic efforts of followers who want to duplicate his success. Saddest of all was the case of Janet Cooke, who won a Pulitzer Prize for a story she had entirely made up in the world's most high-pressure newsroom. It was only to be expected, given the "star" system that Bradlee encouraged, and in explaining it he comes close to a realization of the lamentable effect of his career. Instead, however, he veers away to blame TV for the lack of a necessary "context" for reports.

Bradlee finally does express some dismay at the decline of "truth" in our nation's life. Newsmakers are increasingly liars, he notes, and agencies like the CIA, which used to be responsible when reporters approached *them* for information, now make a mess when they "try to make things happen." One could say the same about the press itself. But this is no more than an aside; Bradlee has no reflections on the giddiness of our politics, the trashiness of our culture, the irresponsibility of our social life. Or the part that a developing news industry played in it all.

People of the Covenant

THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL : THE IDEA OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE. By DAVID NOVAK. *Cambridge University Press. 285 pp. $54.95.*

Reviewed by **John T. Pawlikowski**

DAVID NOVAK, deeply rooted as his writing always is in classical Jewish religious thought, here addresses the issue of religious identity in light of the challenge of modernity. While his sources and his response are quite specifically Jewish, his questions and his method of inquiry put before all believing people today fundamental issues of religious identity. Seeing this volume as the logical sequel to his earlier works *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* and *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, Novak asks the fundamental question for the contemporary Jew who desires to live out in the world: What does it mean to be part of an "elected" or "chosen" people?

To answer this question, Novak examines the thought of Baruch Spinoza (Judaism's first genuine modern thinker), Hermann Cohen (the German liberal thinker whose viewpoint was strongly influenced by Immanuel Kant), Franz Rosenzweig (the German Jewish philosopher who began a movement for the reappropriation of the Jewish tradition), and Michael Wyschogrod (the contemporary Orthodox Jewish philosopher who has reaffirmed Israel's election as a central tenet in his book *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election*).

Novak finds none of the four perspectives fully acceptable, though he is most sympathetic to Wyschogrod, whose thought comes closest to meeting the threefold standard for authentic Jewish identity: (1) Israel is related to God because of her divine election; (2) Israel's relation to God is a consequence of the divine revelation of Torah; and (3) In view of her election, Israel "enjoys" a certain separation from the nations of the world.

Spinoza, by inverting the biblical doctrine of election, claimed that it was in fact Israel who elected God, not vice-versa. Though Spinoza himself severed relations with the Jewish community as a result of his philosophical vision, Novak argues that Spinoza's legacy has produced a crisis in Judaism. Modern Jewish thinkers came to believe that Spinoza had provided them with a way to deny any transcendent dimension to Jewish identity while remaining—unlike Spinoza himself—within the Jewish community. It is important that the Spinoza legacy be overcome, says Novak, if there is to be any genuine hope of restoring the classical doctrine of election.

Hermann Cohen stands as a good example of the modern, post-Spinozan thinker. God, for Cohen, is Being per se, in need of no further relation—and in fact incapable of engaging in relation. Cohen's God does not make choices, according to Novak, and there thus cannot be any ultimate election of Israel. For Cohen the "election of Israel" makes sense only on moral grounds in the "pre-messianic" era. The separate existence of the Jewish people is necessary *until* the time when messianic unity is finally achieved.

As Novak interprets Cohen, Israel must safeguard monotheistic messianism until full realization. But this, Novak insists, results in the reduction of the doctrine of Israel's election to the doctrine of the revelation of the Torah conceived primarily in terms of its moral content. The Noahide laws play a central role in Cohen's approach to Torah because they are quintessentially moral. This approach runs counter, says Novak, to the basic thrust of rabbinic thought, which stresses the superiority of the revelation to Israel over the revelation to the world at large.

NOVAK'S ANALYSIS of Franz Rosenzweig is more appreciative but, in the end, still critical. Novak perceives Rosenzweig's writings as

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marking a turning point in modern Jewish thought, keeping the original doctrine of Israel's direct divine election as the *leitmotif* of all his work.

For Rosenzweig love of God has priority over human love because it represents a response to God's initial act of love in revelation. This revelation, for Rosenzweig, must be social because the human person is social by nature. And the only "kinship community" that has constituted itself by an event of the communal experience of revelation is the Jewish people. To Christianity's credit, it has been the only non-Jewish religion to recognize the significance of the revelation to Israel. Hence its task, according to Rosenzweig, is to gather all of humanity into that reality while Judaism's mission is to preserve the purity of the original revelation. Christianity and Judaism ultimately need each other, the former to avoid paganism, the latter to escape marginalization.

Despite its attraction, Novak still discerns a flaw in Rosenzweig's compromising the transcendence of redemption by depicting it as the culmination of a process in which Jews and Christians have a decisive role. Rabbinic teaching has always argued that the redemption of the world would be intimately linked with the redemption of the Jewish people. Jewish eschatology, as Novak understands it, ultimately involves the "judaization" of all humanity. But, unlike Rosenzweig's contention, it will result from another mysterious act of God, not from human effort, Jewish or non-Jewish.

Novak makes the important, albeit controversial, judgment that the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" refers only to other Jews. Friendship with justice is required in relations with those outside the covenant, but covenantal love is not. Only God can, and will, one day bring Christians, Muslims, and others into the realm of covenantal love. Jews cannot do that on their own.

After examining the biblical, rabbinic, and two medieval views of election Novak turns his attention to the proposal of Michael Wyschogrod, a contemporary Orthodox Jewish scholar who, like Novak, has been significantly involved in the Christian-Jewish dialogue. Novak is quite sympathetic to Wyschogrod's approach, which defines election primarily in terms of the special divine presence to Israel.

Novak finds Wyschogrod's interpretation weak in important respects, however. Lacking a dialectic between a theology of grace and a theology of merit, Wyschogrod has subordinated the Torah to the Jewish people to a degree that is unacceptable: there must remain a balance in Jewish life between election and obligation. Wyschogrod's position leaves Jews without a transcendent standard for governing their relationships with the nations of the world—and thereby risks a coercive dominance.

For Novak the election of Israel involves an altogether special relation with God that is central to cosmic redemption (even though we have no idea how that will happen). But election also involves application of the Torah as universal moral law. This second aspect of election counters any temptation to chauvinism and enables Jews to work with non-Jews on common human issues involving peace, justice, and righteousness.

Novak has written a challenging volume that brings the classical Jewish tradition into dialogue with the realities of modernity, and has done so in masterful fashion. Several of his conclusions are quite convincing: the primacy of divine initiative, the superiority of particular communal identity to vague universalistic attachment, the uncertainty of the final shape of the divine reign beyond the "extension" of Israel's covenant to all of humanity, and the importance of Torah's universal

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moral law as a point of unity between Jews and non-Jews.

In the end, however, I cannot accept Novak's ahistorical approach to the *understanding* of Israel's election. While it is a divine act, it can be apprehended only by human persons who are inevitably the subjects of history. The understanding of election must necessarily be affected by events in human history and by shifts in historical consciousness. Novak's analysis suffers from a failure to grapple seriously with the Holocaust's impact on our understanding of human and divine responsibility and with the issue of human freedom. In the Catholic community Vatican II has affirmed freedom as an integral part of a contemporary religious ethic, and Catholicism's recent emphasis on human co-creatorship is at least indirectly a response to the post-Holocaust understanding of human responsibility.

I remain quite uncomfortable, perhaps even disturbed, at the potential implications of Novak's interpretation of "love of neighbor." The separation he makes between "convenantal love" and justice in terms of election is much too strong. It certainly runs counter to the Christian position put forth by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, and whether it is true even to Judaism seems debatable.

GIVEN HIS COMMITMENT to the betterment of relations between Jews and Christians, Novak needs to take greater account of the recent research both by Jewish and Christian scholars that suggests that the initial separation between Christianity and Judaism was far more gradual than we originally believed. Such an extended separation certainly does not easily fit the rather rigid inside/outside approach Novak has taken to understanding the covenant.

Despite these serious reservations, one must commend Novak for a truly provocative volume. He has asked the right questions in a clear, stimulating way, and for that we must indeed be grateful.

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Roundup of Books on Mysticism

JULIAN OF NORWICH'S SHOWINGS: FROM VISION TO BOOK. By DENISE NOWAKOWSKI BAKER. *Princeton University Press. 215 pp. $29.95.*

MEISTER ECKHART AND THE BEGUINE MYSTICS. Edited by BERNARD MCGINN. *Continuum. 166 pp. $19.95.*

THE GROWTH OF MYSTICISM: GREGORY THE GREAT THROUGH THE 12TH CENTURY. By BERNARD MCGINN. *Crossroad. 630 pp. $49.50.*

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM: AN INTRODUCTION. By DAN COHN-SHERBOK and LAVINIA COHN-SHERBOK. *Continuum. 186 pp. $22.50.*

PRAYING WITH JULIAN OF NORWICH. By RITMARY BRADLEY. *Twenty-Third Publications. 184 pp. $12.95.*

***Reviewed by* John Farina**

IT HAS BEEN nearly twenty years since the great and surprising burst of interest in spirituality induced the publication in the late 1970s of several major series of books in English on Western mysticism. Those series were the result of an attempt to bring long-neglected masterpieces of Western thought to the attention not only of scholars but to an entire populace perceived to be starving in the desert of pop culture. Since then hundreds of works from the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish mystical traditions have been published. The five books reviewed here continue that process and, as such, are interesting not only as individual works of scholarship but as markers of still current trends.

Perhaps the most interesting development over the years is the growth of interpretive sophistication. Denise Nowakowski Baker's *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* is a fine example. Baker's work is not preoccupied with the textual details of *Showings*—with questions of authorship and dating, or with debates about the provenance of manuscripts—as were some of the 1970s works on Julian. Baker presents us instead with a highly nuanced interpretation in which she attempts to trace Julian's journey from mystical experience to mystical text. She delves into Julian's fundamental experiences of her own body and her family—and finds in them the key for understanding her literary efforts. The result is believable and enlightening.

In no English works are the interpretive possibilities explored as comprehensively as in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, edited

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by Bernard McGinn, a collection of seven essays on the Beguine mystics Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete. The book furthers the proposition, advanced by much recent scholarship, that the Beguine movement was one of the most fertile grounds for women's spiritual expression during the Middle Ages. The little-known links between those women mystics, whose writing often drew the ire of the religious establishment, and Meister Eckhart, whose bold speculations resulted in his work often being misunderstood, are shown through a literary analysis of the texts and common themes. While it is probable that Eckhart read Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* (which earned her death at the stake), it is not at all certain that Eckhart had any direct contact with Hadewijch or Mechtilde. The point of the essays is not to claim direct historical influence but to show what Eckhart shared with the thirteenth-century women mystics. The result is to rehabilitate further the image of the Beguines by placing their experience in the context of the thought of the greatest of the German mystics.

The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great Through the 12th Century is the second volume of McGinn's history of Western mysticism. In *The Foundations of Mysticism* (1991), McGinn undertook the task of providing "a more complete and critical knowledge of the history of Christian mysticism, as well as a more adequate contemporary theological appraisal of the phenomenon." Rejecting the classical distinction between mysticism and mystical theology, McGinn showed in that first volume that the interaction between conscious acts and their symbolic and theoretical thematizations is best seen as a piece and best uncovered through historical analysis.

The present volume continues the epic story with the same methodological brilliance that characterized the earlier work. McGinn narrates the development of Christian mysticism from the end of the Roman Empire to its full flowering in the Middle Ages. It was a time of transformation of culture, of economies, and of populations. The cultural fabric of the Empire, the *res publica romana*, was giving way to a new synthesis known as *Christianitas*. The urban culture of the late Empire, in which Christianity had grown as a city religion, was being replaced by de-urbanization, which brought with it the feudal system in which land owners constructed agriculturally based systems of social organization that replaced the urban middle classes. New peoples as well played increasingly visible roles in the civilization of those years. Barbarian tribes like the Franks with their wandering hunting societies or rural agricultural economies came to power and even supplied, in the person of Charlemagne, kingly leadership for the new society.

The Christian spirituality that developed during that time was a response to the age. There was a movement of the old Roman aristocracy into the Church during the late fifth century. As the Empire declined, the power of the Church and its leaders emerged. Especially pronounced was the birth of the concept of the primacy of Rome; Rome become the touchstone and rallying point for Christian orthodoxy in a world challenged from the outside by the centripetal forces of change.

Early medieval spirituality incorporated that sense of the political importance of Church leaders with the other great formative force of the age: monasticism. Rural in its geography, agricultural in its economy, and tribal in its polity, monasticism fit the time in which it was born and provided a Christian response to the forces shaping the world order. The amalgam of monasticism and clerical power formed what McGinn describes as a "concrete sacrality" in which subject and object came together in an undifferentiated whole. The focus on the ascetical holy man—a type of barbarian warrior chief—was balanced with an emphasis on moralism and adherence to external standards that fit the role of the Church as maintainer of the social order.

In all, McGinn's treatment is richly detailed and compelling and furthers his goal of presenting the history of mystical theory and practice in the context of the wider sweep of civilization.

Another trend over the last twenty years has been the rise of comparative studies of spiritualities. Dan and Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok's elegantly written *Jewish and Christian Mysticism: An Introduction* is a further indication of that hopeful trend. The work traces the development of Jewish mysticism from the first-century thought of Philo of Alexandria to the twentieth-century work of Abraham Isaac Kook. Aimed at a general audience, the book begins with the story of an American Jewish woman who, disgusted by the spiritually barren atmosphere of secular Judaism, left her faith and become a Hindu. She had been pushed over the edge by a book written by a popular rabbi, *I'd Like to Call God But I Don't Know the Number!*

The Cohn-Sherboks begin with a survey of the works of the early rabbinic period in which the rich Neo-

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platonic speculations of Philo and his school produced the cosmological concepts of the divine agent *Metatron* who was believed to mediate between the cosmos and God and the ten *sefirot*, the mysterious paths by which the process of creation occurred. They then move to the medieval period and the development of the *kabbalah*. They trace the Rhineland mystics of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* tradition and the Spanish kabbalists like Moses ben Shen Tov de Leon who produced the *Zohar*. They follow the traditions into the post-medieval period, which saw the development of Abraham ben Isaac of Granada's *Berit Menuhah* and the work of the great Safed masters like Isaac Luria that developed after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain at the turn of the sixteenth century. They review the thought of nineteenth-century writers Aaron Roth and Isaac Joda Hehiel Safrin and end with a discussion of Kook's earthly Zionism.

To that is appended a survey of Christian mysticism from Origen to the twentieth-century work of Henri Le Saux and Thomas Merton.

In the most interesting part of the work, the authors compare the two traditions and conclude that they share a belief in divine intermediaries and the *via negativa* as a true path of enlightenment. Although Jewish mystics obviously did not have the Christians' emphasis on Christ as the second person of the Trinity, they did insist that divine intermediaries were an integral part of the presence of the one God in the world. For Philo, the mediation was accomplished through angels. For the rabbis who formulated the concept of *Shekhinah*, it was that indwelling presence of God by which He sanctified the world. And in the Middle Ages, the *sefirot* represented emanations of the divine that took on material expression in the world.

The *via negativa*, or the way of negation, was also a common feature of Jewish and Christian spiritualities. It was thought that any attempt to represent God was always flawed and risked limiting the Almighty. As a result, efforts to say what God is not were often closer to the mark for both the Jewish and Christian mystic. As the twelfth-century kabbalist Azriel of Gerona put it: "Know that the *Ayn Sof* cannot be thought of, much less spoken of, even though there is a hint of it in all things, for there is nothing else apart from it." The Christian master of the negative way, the Pseudo-Dionysius, said it this way: "Concerning the hidden super-essential Godhead we must not dare to speak or even to form any conception thereof except those things which are divinely revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures."

In all, this is an able and enjoyable work that provides an apt survey of two traditions plus some valuable insights on their similarities.

THE LAST WORK in the quintet is from an accomplished scholar of Julian of Norwich, Ritmary Bradley. *Praying With Julian of Norwich* offers selections from Julian's *Showings* plus commentary. It is aimed at popular devotion, a kind of prayerful reading of the text, or *lectio devina*. Each section is broken into texts from Julian about prayer, followed by a short commentary, followed by more text and another commentary. The book covers the style, subject matter, and theology of Julian's prayers. Although Julian's texts are clearly not as suited to *lectio devina* as are scriptures, they contain possibilities that Bradley illustrates. In short, this is a book that must be used rather than simply read.

And in that the real question about the study of spirituality emerges. We know we can learn about the times and places of the past when reading mystics of old, but can we gain anything of real value for our lives today? The assumption behind each of the works surveyed here is that indeed we can gain much. But these works must be read with care. And then they must be prayed.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES: A NEW TRANSLATION WITH INTRODUCTIONS, COMMENTARY, AND NOTES. By EVERETT FOX. *Schocken. 1,024 pp. $50.*

This volume stands alone among the many new translations of the Bible that have appeared in recent years. In fact, Everett Fox's volume is less a translation of the Pentateuch at all than an imitation of its Hebrew within the confines of contemporary American English. As he nicely puts it in the preface, "I have presented the text in English dress but with a Hebraic voice." Those more interested in the ideas in the Torah than in the experience of reading it will receive quite a jolt when they first look into Fox. For, recognizing that "there is a difference between translating what the text means and translating what it says," he emphatically elects the latter, thus reconnecting the genre of modern Bible translation with the ancient practice of reading aloud and, as a result, conveying much of the texture of the Hebrew in ways that other translations cannot. Paying "careful attention to rhythm and sound," Professor Fox "tries to mimic the particular rhetoric of the Hebrew whenever possible, preserving such devices as repetition, allusion, alliteration, and wordplay"—all essential to an accurate understanding of the text and well-nigh impossible to capture in a more fluent English rendering. Consequently, the poetry that so often lurks just beneath the prose of the narrative (and often the law as well) can once again be heard, a process enormously aided by Fox's disregard of the late verse divisions and his replacement of them with colons that better reflect the rhythms of the Hebrew itself. He somewhat mitigates the shock of all this to the reader unfamiliar with the original by providing helpful introductions and notes and a useful bibliography. But he still insists "that the reader must be prepared to meet the Bible at least halfway and must become an

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active participant in the process of the text, rather than a passive listener." As Fox gratefully acknowledges, the idea for his work came from the great translation of the whole Hebrew Bible into German begun by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber in 1925 and finished by Buber alone in 1962, thirty-three years after Rosenzweig's death. More supple than English, German is better suited for this kind of translation, and in both instances one can wonder whether the Hebrew sounded so exotic, so choppy, and so gruff to an ancient Israelite as it does when its cadences and conventions are mimicked in a modern Western language. Fox's "text in English dress but with a Hebraic voice" sometimes sounds more like English pronounced with a Hebrew accent, with all the danger of misunderstanding therein entailed. This is, nonetheless, a major achievement in the history of English translations of the Bible, and if it underscores all that is lost when one approaches the text without a knowledge of Hebrew, that, too, makes it a worthy contribution.

— *Jon D. Levenson*

Pluralism and Particularity in Religious Belief. Brad Stetson. *Praeger. 145 pp. $45.*

In the Christian theology-of-other-religions debate, John Hick's pluralist hypothesis dominates the field. According to Hick, all religions are equally salvific; we are all taking different routes up the same mountain. Many teachers of religion simply assume that this is the only morally just position to take. Yet the hypothesis is problematic: little things, like Truth and the Incarnation, have to go. Brad Stetson, in this well-written and elegant book, has set out to expose the difficulties in the pluralism hypothesis. Hick is the target of his analysis: the concept of truth is confused; pluralism should not be allowed to claim the ethical high ground; and the whole outlook has striking parallels with some of the confusions endemic in postmodernism. On the ground marked out by Stetson, he is entirely victorious. His arguments are well-constructed and sharp. However, in the last chapter, he sketches out his alternative—Christian particularism (i.e., exclusivism). While one can concede that there is value in exclusivism, Stetson fails to confront the substantial difficulty. The problem is that the God of the exclusivism is not

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trinitarian: in correctly stressing the revelation of God in Christ, the exclusivist loses sight of the creator God who is active throughout the world. Stetson's positive alternative needs more work. Even so, his study remains a superb analysis and critique of a highly influential position. For that we should be grateful.

— *Ian Markham*

GRACE AND RESPONSIBILITY: A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY FOR TODAY. By JOHN B. COBB, JR. *Abingdon Press. 192 pp. $14.95 paper.*

This book is the result of a lecture series on "Wesleyan Theology and Process Theology" delivered in 1993 by process theologian John Cobb. It is offered as a hopeful proposal for the United Methodist Church to "reclaim its past and move forward into its future." Cobb's is not a back-to-Wesley proposal. Rather, his is an attempt at appropriating and updating Wesley. Though Cobb's sketches of Wesleyan theory and practice are helpful, problems arise. His update, the author himself confesses, involves "extensive translation and revision"; and extensive it is. In general, the book translates and revises Wesley to be modernity-friendly. Cobb contends that the Wesleyan project, yesterday and today, centers on love, faith, good works, and the Holy Spirit's action in the lives of believers and in their life together. Therefore, reason and experience, along with Scripture and tradition, deserve to be given formative roles in the church's life. Unfortunately, this leaves little place for church-constituting truth. Indeed, Cobb argues that confessional and creedal consensus is not essential for the denomination's mission, and he suggests that those who are overly concerned with doctrine are the real heretics who should look elsewhere for ecclesial homes. Cobb's Wesleyan proposal, nuanced and sophisticated as it is, in the end offers up a liberal Protestant agenda that has been around for decades. (Though his note on Wesley's engagement with slavery, on the basis of natural law, has significant implications for contemporary Methodism's engagement with abortion.) The Wesley processed by John Cobb is alive and well in the academic, bureaucratic, and leadership offices of the United Methodist Church. Hence, this book functions more as a brief for the status quo than a proposal for the future.

— *Paul T. Stallsworth*

SEEDBEDS OF VIRTUE. Edited by MARY ANN GLENDON and DAVID BLANKENHORN. *Madison. 294 pp. $27.95.*

To a remarkable degree the "family policy" debate of the last three or four years has been won. Dan Quayle was right: Americans should not celebrate Murphy Brown deciding to have a baby. What is happening to the family in the United States and other developed countries produces dreadful consequences for everyone, and especially for children. On that almost everybody agrees. What has not been won is the debate over what should now be done. Some want to fiddle with the welfare state, while others want to dismantle it and rely solely on the dynamics of freedom. This book persuasively offers a "civil society strategy." The title refers to what Berger and Neuhaus call "mediating institutions" and Glendon terms "communities of memory and mutual aid." They are the civil institutions—and most importantly the family—that turn children into good citizens. In addition to the editors, contributors to this book include some of the wisest heads around: Don S. Browning, Jean Bethke Elshtain, James Q. Wilson, David Popenoe, and Judith Martin ("Miss Manners"), among others. All sensible people these days say they are pro-family. This book helps us to understand why that is, and how Americans might turn pro-family talk into steps toward the renewal of the family and the civil society of which it is the most crucial part.

THE PLURALIST GAME. By FRANCIS CANAVAN, S.J. *Rowman & Littlefield. 164 pp. $22.95.*

In 1963 Fr. Canavan claimed that the reasoning behind the Supreme Court's school prayer decisions would diminish rather than increase pluralism in American life, and it did. In 1965 he argued that the government's distribution of funds exclusively through state-managed bureaucracies would endanger private charities and impose an impossible burden on the monolithic welfare state, and it has. In 1983 he asserted that public obscenity and the pornography industry had become the sign of liberalism out of control, and who either here or in Eastern Europe since 1989 could disagree? But the republication of these fourteen essays from the last thirty years constitutes more than the "I told you so" of an unheeded Cassandra. Fr. Canavan, now an emeritus professor at Fordham University, is one of our most careful thinkers about church and state, a Catholic political theorist whose time at last has come. The consistent theoretical work behind these essays, the intellectual analysis that undergirds them, make *The Pluralist Game* valuable reading for anyone who wants to understand how we got ourselves into this mess and—more important—how we might get ourselves out.

RED SCARE OR RED MENACE? AMERICAN COMMUNISM AND ANTICOMMUNISM IN THE COLD WAR ERA. By JOHN E. HAYNES. *Ivan R. Dee. 214 pp. $24.95.*

The author, an historian at the Library of Congress, has had access to recently opened Soviet archives which make clear that American Communists, far from being "liberals in a hurry," were frequently knowing agents of the Soviet Union. In this balanced overview of the controversies swirling around anticommunism in the U.S., a convincing case is made for the conclusion that, all in all, the anticommunism of the 1940s and 1950s was an "understandable and rational response" to a very real threat to American democracy. Heroes in this telling are such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Arthur Schlesinger, and Hubert Humphrey, even if, as Payne points out, most of these liberal figures failed to see that some

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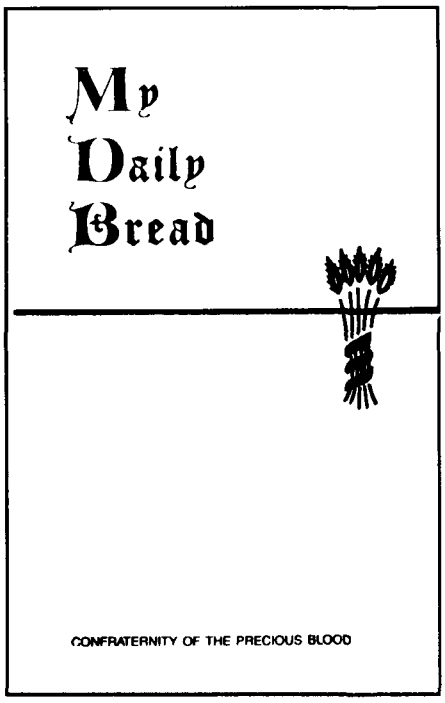

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others, such as Whittaker Chambers, understood aspects of the threat better than they. The book is a welcome antidote to the Oliver Stoning of American history.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE ROCK: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT, AND MISSION OF THE PAPACY. By J. MICHAEL MILLER. *Our Sunday Visitor. 383 pp. $19.95.*

This book has got just about everything in a relatively short compass, plus the advantage of being very nicely written. The problem of bad popes, the blessing of holy ones, and whether it's possible to get rid of heretical ones; how Peter got to Rome, if he did, and why more emphasis should be placed on the pope as patriarch of the West rather than universal pastor; what is meant by infallible teaching, and why the papacy is assuming ever greater ecumenical importance. Miller's treatment is impeccably orthodox while also engaging fairly the views of more peccable theologians. Warmly recommended for Catholic and non-Catholic readers alike.

WRITING WAS EVERYTHING. By ALFRED KAZIN. *Harvard University Press. 152 pp. $17.50.*

Even the most apparently aimless country rambles find a destination, when lead by a master guide. In this printing of his 1994 Massey Lectures at Harvard, Alfred Kazin meanders through his sixty years as a master critic and reviewer, pausing here and there to recollect as a book, an essay, or a personality comes to mind. Writing was indeed everything for Kazin, but what he really means is that writing about reading was everything: "Book and notebook," he remembers, "went hand in hand." Along the way in his writer's life, he met all the writers of his time, all the artists, thinkers, and characters, and he recounts the stories of his meetings with them all. But these lectures mostly concern a time in American life in which he remembers literature mattering more than it does now. The destination of Kazin's ramble through his memories is his realization that when writing succumbs to ideology and critical theory, it ceases to illuminate human experience—and quickly ceases to matter.

CREATION AT RISK? RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND ENVIRONMENTALISM. Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE. *Eerdmans. 166 pp. $15 paper.*

An unusually well-informed and straightforward consideration of the many questions included under the rubric "environmentalism." The treatment is the more valuable because care has been taken to engage opposing arguments. Cromartie is senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C., and has produced an exchange that transcends the conventional polemics on these issues.

RECLAIMING THE BIBLE FOR THE CHURCH. Edited by CARL E. BRAATEN and ROBERT W. JENSON. *Eerdmans. 137 pp. $13 paper.*

Simply to list the contributors is to say this is an important book. Elizabeth Achtemeier, Brevard S. Childs, Karl P. Donfried, Roy A. Harrisville, Thomas Hopko, Aidan J. Kavanaugh, Alister E. McGrath, and of course the two editors, both of whom are contributors to this journal. Using Childs' "canonical" interpretation of Scripture, all the authors address the question of bridging the yawning gap between critical scholarship, on the one hand, and the Church's worship and mission, on the other.

ANCESTRAL VOICES: RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN IRELAND. By CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. *University of Chicago Press. 221 pp. $13.95 paper.*

Twenty years ago the author published *States of Ireland*, in which he outlined a benign and a most malign future for Ireland. Only the second is believable now, according to O'Brien. The increasing convergence of religion and nationalism drives the determination of the Sinn Fein-IRA, with help from Irish Americans, to drive the British from the North and beat the Protestant majority into subjection. The current "peace process" ballyhooed by the Clinton Administration is, in O'Brien's view, utterly fraudulent. There are many who hope that the recently disturbed pause in "the troubles" will be restored and made permanent, but O'Brien offers naught for their comfort. One must hope that he is wrong.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR: A MEMOIR OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAITH. By SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR. *Putnam. 243 pp. $22.95.*

Former codirector of the Peace Corps and, much more important, former pastor of Abyssinian Baptist in Harlem, Dr. Proctor gives ample evidence in his memoir that he is in almost all respects a thoroughly decent man. Reared within the black bourgeoisie, Proctor is rightly appalled by the violence, crime, and general degradation that defines so much of the life of the urban underclass. He is upbeat about the possibilities of faith and education to remedy these ills, although all his specific recommendations are for more of the same from the welfare state. His manifest decency fails him in his railings against Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell, and others whom he describes as black conservatives striving to ingratiate themselves with the white establishment. Foreword by Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund.

WELFARE IN AMERICA: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON A POLICY IN CRISIS. Edited by STANLEY W. CARLSON-THIESS and JAMES W. SKILLEN. *Eerdmans. 581 pp. $22 paper.*

A very big book of twenty-two essays that, in the course of ranging across a vast variety of analyses and proposals, provides a long introduction to the current debate about welfare reform. The essays emerge from conferences sponsored by the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C., which combines centrist poli-

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WHY A MONK AT SAINT LOUIS ABBEY?

Our religion is essentially contemplative. It tells us that a man is risen from the dead and living forever with the power of God to transform human life. What is required of us is to pay attention to the spiritual, invisible, but real presence of this God-made-man, to focus on Him and accept His loving, healing, renewing activity in our lives. This spiritual attention requires a certain letting go of preoccupation with earthly things, and allowing space for His action, a silence, a self-denial, self-emptying, a withdrawal, in which all our powers are submitted to His direction. Energized by His life we return to the world to attempt to love and serve others as we are loved.

A monastery is a place set aside for this attentiveness to God with a view to submission to His transforming action in drawing the individual and the world to Himself. It is a place for alertness to God, friendship with Him, healing for the world. The life of a monk, the witness of a monastery are needed as much as ever in our world where noise, materialism, and the frenetic, frantic pursuit of pleasure are obscuring the call to the simplicity which leads to peace, the call of an infinite person who seeks to dwell with us. It is a happy vocation because in tune with fundamental realities: God, life, joy, the spirit, truth; and it ennobles the lives of others by handing on to them and modeling for them the Good News that offers something to live for, "reasons for living and hoping," a happy, meaningful life.

For the laying open of the self to the purifying action of Christ and His Spirit is the introduction into the community of divine and human persons that every human heart was made for and craves. In this way contemplation builds community. Even the sacrifices that the life entails, the crucifixion of self-indulgent desires that Christ and St. Paul speak of, are surrounded by the promise of joy and made endurable by a growing share in the life of Christ.

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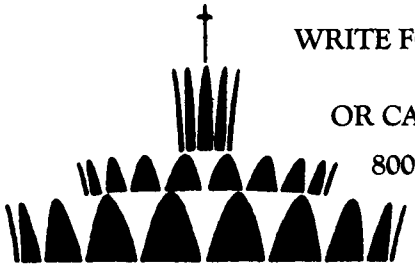

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tics with a mostly Calvinist theological and ethical orientation. While the book will definitely be of interest to policy specialists, there is no one clear and crisp argument that is likely to capture the attention of politicians or the general public.

GOD: A BIOGRAPHY. By JACK MILES. *Knopf. 446 pages. $15 paper.*

The newspaperman Jack Miles is a former Jesuit, trained as a biblical scholar, who left the *Los Angeles Times* to undertake a literary study of the Old Testament, and *God: A Biography,* issued now in paperback, presents the results of his trek. The fundamental question for readers of the Bible, as Miles sees it, is the question of literary character. When we encounter a text like *Hamlet,* we must, in order to make any sense of it at all, perform what Coleridge called "the willing suspension of disbelief" and assume that the characters are somehow real people. Similarly—*similarly?*—when we read the Bible we must perform the suspension of disbelief and assume the protagonist God to be a real person. This God-Character tries on various roles—six major and eighteen minor, according to Miles' account—and gradually finds that His point is to disappear from His story altogether: the Old Testament ends with human histories. Miles believes his account to be a daring, postmodern one. And in a postmodern context that rejects all biblical content, it probably is. But what it has to say to the faith that does more than suspend disbelief is something of a question.

NOT MY OWN: ABORTION AND THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH. By TERRY SCHLOSSBERG and ELIZABETH ACHTEMEIER. *Eerdmans. 137 pp. $11 paper.*

Members of the mainline Protestant denominations will especially welcome this clear and straightforward presentation of the impossibility of *any* Christian remaining a Christian and supporting abortion on demand. Biblical theology and sacramental theology—as the distinctive marks of the Church—combine in the authors' analysis to point to the absolute necessity to defend the unborn. The classical theological analysis and the responsible treatment of the distinctiveness of Christian responses to ethical questions make this an important and highly recommended resource, not only for those engaged in answering the pro-abortion forces, but for all who want to understand why Christians can never accede to an abortion culture.

TELLING THE TRUTH. By LYNNE V. CHENEY. *Simon & Schuster. 255 pp. $23.*

If this were just another book about the wacky world of lefty academics and their attempt to make America safe for neo-Marxism, or if this were just another collection of anecdotes about the silliness of political correctness, it wouldn't be all that valuable. The news is news, as A. E. Housman once put it, that men have heard before. But Lynne Cheney—heading the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1986 to 1992—has fought in the trenches of the culture wars and has seen up close the damage to our cultural sense of beauty and purpose that those wars have wrought. *Telling the Truth*—the title is drawn from Václav Havel's expression for the opposition to tyranny, "living in truth"—certainly contains its share of anecdotal evidence. It contains as well, however, an important assertion of the intellectual causes of our current situation and argues a strong case that political correctness on campuses, the disappearance of journalism's standard of objectivity, and the frightening phenomenon of "recovered memories" in jurisprudence all derive from the single source of the culture's increasing disdain for truth. Along the way, the book makes an impassioned and convincing plea for a return to old-fashioned standards. The humanities and the arts may not often reach the high goals of beauty, morality, and truth, but they must not cease to strive for them.

ARE WE ALONE? PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS OF THE DISCOVERY OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE. By PAUL DAVIES. *Basic. 176 pp. $20.*

Paul Davies is the Australian physicist whose writings on the relation between theology and mathematical physics won him the 1995 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. (His Templeton acceptance speech was published in FIRST THINGS, August/September 1995, and generated a lively exchange between Davies and his critics in our correspondence section, December 1995.) In his new book, *Are We Alone?*, Davies presents in an accessible way the current scientific thinking about life on other planets and meditates on the philosophical complications that the discovery of extraterrestrial life would create. His scientific explanations—in his accounts of DNA probability and the factors involved in light-speed transmissions—are not easy, but they are not beyond the reader untrained in mathematics. Theologians will want to ponder Davies' cosmology carefully, for the way in which he claims "organized complexity" and a universe of design sends tricky and ambiguous signals that seem at first blush more likely to support pantheism than orthodox theology. But Davies is one of our few contemporary thinkers who understands the extent to which even cosmological issues as speculative as the existence of extraterrestrial life have implications for both science and theology. His passionate defense of the dignity of knowledge and his rousing rejection of the notion that truth could be divided make nearly anything he writes important reading.

WHAT ON EARTH IS THE CHURCH? AN EXPLORATION IN NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY. By KEVIN GILES. *InterVarsity. 310 pp. $16.99 paper.*

For many, if not most, Protestants, the Church is somewhat incidental to being a Christian. That's not true of New Testament Christianity, argues this evangelical Protestant author, and he argues the point with

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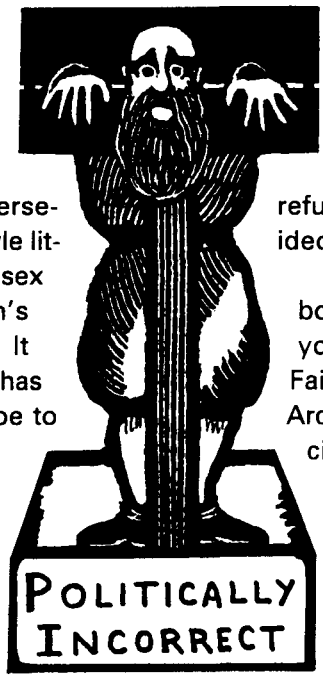

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learning and verve. A welcome addition to a growing evangelical literature on the doctrine of the Church.

HISTORY OF PARADISE. By JEAN DELUMEAU. *Continuum. 288 pp. $29.50.*

After a rather casual introductory account of the lost "Golden Age" in the myths of the Greeks and other ancient cultures, Jean Delumeau traces in eleven careful and fascinating chapters the concept of the Garden of Eden in the history of Christian thought. Delumeau handles with great verve the endless debates in the patristic and medieval writers about the exact geographical location of the Garden, about the extent of powers lost to humankind in the expulsion from the Garden, and even about the diet and sexuality of Adam and Eve before the Fall. His conclusion, however, in which he claims that modern scientific advances have put an end to any literal reading of the Garden of Eden and thereby put an end to the "pessimistic anthropology" of St. Augustine, is less than convincing.

ON EDUCATION. Our whole "liberal arts" education is built upon this uneasy tension between secular disciplines having their origin in the Renaissance, and religious disciplines having their origin in the Reformation. In fact, the processes of education with their inevitable emphasis on science and philosophy have rather favored the Renaissance against the Reformation, and have frequently relegated religion to an outmoded "pre-scientific" mode of thought and life. But meanwhile, they did, by a rational analysis of all the sequences and coherences of the world of nature and history, encourage the mind of man to comprehend the total mystery and meaning of human existence, and have emancipated the mind from the "superstitions" to which previous religious ages were undoubtedly prone. They have emphasized causal sequence and coherence, and thereby obscured the deeper mystery of creation. They have emphasized rational coherence, and thereby they have obscured the unique human self, involved on the one hand in the "incoherence" of his sin, and on the other hand in the incoherence of "grace," or forgiveness, and redemption. For these ultimate dimensions of human selfhood there is no place in any philosophy or any science, and certainly not in a naturalistic one.

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Religion and Freedom of Thought* (1954)

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

A Friendly But Dangerous Embrace

"Ticking Crime Bomb" is a troubling article in the *Weekly Standard* by hard-nosed Princeton criminologist John J. DiIulio. While crime statistics have dipped recently, demographic and other forces are building for a big explosion in the near future. What to do? The best single answer, says DiIulio, is religion. "Why religion? Two reasons. First a growing body of scientific evidence from a variety of academic disciplines indicates that churches can help cure or curtail many severe socioeconomic ills. For example, a 1986 study by Harvard economist Richard Freeman found that among black urban youth, church attendance was a better predictor of who would escape drugs, crime, and poverty than any other single variable (e.g., income, family structure) and that churchgoing youth were more likely than otherwise comparable youth to behave in socially constructive ways. Likewise, a study by a panel of leading specialists just published by the journal *Criminology* concluded that, while much work remains to be done, there is substantial empirical evidence that religion serves 'as an insulator against crime and delinquency.' And we have long known that many of the most effective substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, both in society and behind bars, are either explicitly religious or quasi-religious in their orientation. Second, religion is the one answer offered time and again by the justice-system veterans, prisoners, and others I've consulted. With particular reference to black youth crime, for example, it is an answer proffered in recent books by everyone from liberal Cornel West to neoconservative Glenn Loury, Democrat Jesse Jackson to Republican Alan Keyes."

DiIulio is a strong proponent of incarceration. He notes that from 1985 to 1991 the number of juveniles in custody increased from 49,000 to nearly 58,000, and he believes that 150,000 will have to be incarcerated in the years just ahead. He is all for getting tough against those whom he calls the "super-predators," but getting tough is not enough. "Some of these children are now still in diapers, and they can be saved. So let our guiding principle be, 'Build churches, not jails'—or we will reap the whirlwind of our own moral bankruptcy."

Affirming religion because of its social utility is, to say the least, theologically problematic. It is, in fact, a kind of blasphemy. Ignoring the social utility of religion, on the other hand, is myopic. The months and years ahead will see increasing public policy interest in enlisting religion in tasks of social reconstruction. There will be the usual altercations about the separation of church and state, but the extreme separationists are now playing defense and have to count on the courts to preserve a part of all they have lost in the political forum. This trend toward a more flexible and generous understanding of the free exercise of religion in public is to be warmly welcomed.

At the same time, it is not too early to caution those who care most of all for the integrity of religion that there are real dangers in becoming entangled with public policy. While government's affectionate embrace may have its pleasures, we do well to keep in mind the maxim that the Queen's shilling is followed by the Queen's command. Or, as one pundit put it, "the shekels come with shackles." One way to avoid the government regulation and control that can stifle the very dynamics that enable religious institutions to do so many things so well is to make sure that the shekels go not to the institution but to the people who choose the services of the institution. For example, education vouchers to parents who can then redeem them at the school of their choice.

"Build churches, not jails" is a fine idea. Government can help that to happen. Not by getting into the church-building business, but by: 1) getting out of the way and letting churches do what they do best, and 2) providing vouchers, tax credits, and other measures that enable people to meet their needs in the way they think best. In education, health care, housing, and other needs, almost

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everybody almost all the time knows what is best for them and their children. And those who don't, except in the case of criminal behavior, have the right to be wrong. We do not need the government to build churches. We do need a government that makes it easier for people to build their lives with the help of the institutions that command their trust. When that happens, both religion and the public good will be better served than either is at present.

FT

THE COMING AGE OF THE SPIRIT

Few people have written so imaginatively about the relationship between law and religion as Harold J. Berman, for many years at Harvard and now at Emory. His little book *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (1973) had a strong bearing on my own thinking about these questions, and since then he has produced important tomes on law, revolution, reason, and morality in various cultures. When Harold Berman speaks, it pays to listen.

DePaul Law Review has published the annual lecture of the Center for Church/State Studies in which Berman addresses "Law and Logos." This is an ambitious effort—some would say too ambitious—to set forth a "Christian jurisprudence" that encompasses a trinitarian understanding of human nature and law, offering a legal basis for the emerging global community. This is heady stuff. Talk about global community triggers in some hearts fibrillations of utopian excitement, and from others it evokes dismissive grumblings about globaloney. Berman goes so far as to identify with the twelfth-century enthusiast Abbot Joachim of Fiore in anticipating a coming "age of the Holy Spirit," and takes more seriously than some of us are able to the "Declaration of a Global Ethic" that was drafted by Hans Küng for the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions.

As utopian fevers rise with the approaching Third Millennium, anyone thinking about providentially guided historical dispensations should be inoculated by the reading of Norman Cohn's splendid *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1970). Immunity to millennial fanaticism, however, does not require that one deny the ways in which something quite new is happening to bring the entire world into more intense and complicated interaction. In communications, economics, and interreligious relations, there are hints of an emerging something that might be called a global society, perhaps—stretching the point somewhat—a global community. The undisciplined excitements of a Hans Küng and the ludicrous pretensions of the Parliament of the World's Religions should not blind us to the fact that world-historical change does happen, and that such change may be part of God's unfolding purposes in time.

In this context, Berman's "Law and Logos" is a suggestive contribution. The three main schools of jurisprudence (positivist, natural law, and historical) must, he says, be reintegrated in the world that is emerging, and that requires a shared set of assumptions and aspirations that can only be described as religious. A similar intuition, it might be noted, informs John Paul II's cautious but persistent efforts to create a new conversation among world religions. Both caution and persistence are required if reflection on these questions is to be prevented from launching itself into the stratosphere of never-never-land futurism. In thinking about the common human future, Berman seems to suggest that we must make a decision between the particular and the universal, whereas I would argue that it is through the particular—more specifically, through Christian truth claims—that we more surely understand the universal.

Berman writes: "Blood and soil still command far greater loyalty than our shared transnational economic, political, and cultural interests as well as our shared transnational religious convictions. We must make a decision in our minds and hearts concerning these historical alternatives. It is not simply a matter of what we prefer. It is a matter, first, of what is historically destined, what corresponds to the purposes for which human life was, and continues to be, created on this planet." We would do well to brace ourselves for much more talk along these lines in the years ahead, and we can be sure that most of it will not be so temperate as Harold Berman's argument. There undoubtedly is a decision to be made. But the decision we are called to make, I expect, is not between the particular and the universal but whether these are in fact the "historical alternatives." Huge questions, these. Those interested in their further exploration might find it worth a trip to the library for Harold J. Berman's "Law and Logos."

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OBEYING IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND

In a wide-ranging interview in Ireland's *Sunday Business Post*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF),

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is pressed on the question of women's ordination. After all is said and done, doesn't it make women second-class citizens in the Church? asks reporter David Quinn. It is a great error, responds Ratzinger, "to think priests are first among Christians and everyone else is second class." If we must speak of status, it is determined by holiness, and the great majority of the saints are lay people. Moreover, in the New Testament "you can see that for the Lord priestly service entails being in the last place, not the first. This is the opposite of power and privilege."

Ratzinger allows that the reasons why the Church is not authorized to ordain are not self-evident, but it is finally a matter of obedience. "It must be pointed out first of all that we are not building Christianity out of our own ideas. The Church is given out of the will of God, and the will of God is in turn a gift to the Church and it determines our will. We must be in communion with the will of the Lord. Decisions of the Lord can at first seem inexplicable to us. We must follow his way before we can begin to understand. The Pope is obliged to obey the Lord's will. The Lord's will is visible in the New Testament and in the tradition of the Christian life and he has shown that men and women have different gifts which are shown in different ways but are equal in dignity. We have to reflect more on why the Lord decided so, but we cannot simply treat the Church as a sociological construct and change it according to our will."

Quinn asks if it is possible that someday this decision could be reversed, to which Ratzinger responds, "It is impossible because it is part of the deposit of faith." But maybe a different pope will view the matter differently? Ratzinger says, "There are certain things the pope cannot do if he is to be obedient to the will of God, and this includes allowing the ordination of women. The Church's magisterium [teaching office] is not like a government which can overturn the decisions of its predecessors." But in the making of such decisions shouldn't the Church be more open and democratic? "I think," says Ratzinger "we must reflect more on what democracy in the exercise of authority would mean. Is truth determined by a majority vote, only for a new 'truth' to be 'discovered' by a new majority tomorrow? In the fields of science or medicine such a method of arriving at the truth would not be taken seriously. A democratic magisterium in that sense would be a false magisterium."

Quinn wonders whether Ratzinger and this pope are not trying to impose uniformity on the Church. Not uniformity but unity, says Ratzinger. "It is very important to distinguish between the two." Unity is not just a vague ideal but must be based in the truth, "and that truth cannot be relativized. It has an objective content and it is one of the tasks of the Church to teach what that content is." Then, with an eye toward some Catholic ecumenists, "It is odd that sometimes those who search most ardently for unity with other churches overlook the need for unity within their own church."

Against Ecclesial Omnipotence

While some depict him as the hard-nosed *Panzerkardinal,* Ratzinger is a very gentle man, almost infinitely patient in engaging opposing arguments. Key to his thinking is the connection between understanding and faith as obedience. "We must follow his way before we can begin to understand." Overlooked in many discussions of women's ordination is the fact that the Catholic position is one of self-limiting modesty. There may be good reasons for ordaining women, we may earnestly want to ordain women, but the position is that the Church is not authorized by her Lord to do so. A close associate of the Cardinal's put it to me this way: "Even if one takes the position that we don't know whether or not the Church is authorized, it means there is uncertainty. Does anyone really believe that the Church can or should ordain in doubt?"

Addressing the question in the London *Tablet,* Fr. Avery Dulles takes a similar tack: "As a final consideration favoring the Pope and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, one might consider where the burden of proof must lie. To me it seems clear that the presumption must be on the side of tradition. Even if it were shown to be probable that the whole tradition had erred, that probability would not clear the way to ordaining women, for the sacrament of holy orders could not be properly conferred unless its validity were certain. In view of the arguments given, I do not see how one could obtain certitude that women could be validly ordained to the priesthood."

Dulles notes that John Paul II has many times, and most recently on September 3, 1995, emphasized that the Church's inability to ordain women is entirely separate from the Church's strong affirmation of the equal dignity of women. Dulles comments: "He called for the full involvement of women in the various areas of the Church's life, including theological teaching, liturgical ministry, and pastoral care 'except in those tasks that belong properly to the priest.' To accomplish this integration while reserving the priestly and episcopal office to men is one of the major tasks confronting the Catholic Church in the coming generations."

FT

The Sins of Dr. King

The Martin Luther King, Jr., Plagiarism Story, edited by Theodore Pappas, has been published by

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the Rockford Institute (Rockford, IL, $10), and has renewed, here and there, the discussion of the gap between Dr. King's public and personal lives. In these pages, I have frequently referred to Dr. King in admiring tones, and just as frequently we get letters asking whether I don't know this or that about his personal life. Yes, I know. I was not an intimate of Dr. King's but I knew him fairly well, and I still admire him, with an admiration marked by deep ambivalence.

There is now no dispute about the fact that Dr. King plagiarized much of his doctoral dissertation at Boston University. And, for all the overheated language of his little book, Pappas establishes that much of the prestige media tried to hide or belittle King's wrongdoing, while some academics tried to disguise plagiarism by reference to "creative borrowing" and similar euphemisms. In addition to his plagiarism, which was not limited to the doctorate, it has been public knowledge for a long time that Dr. King was something of a philanderer. Does this mean he was not a great man? In his splendid book, *The Southern Front*, Eugene Genovese speaks of King as a "constructive historical figure" and adds, "Great men, more often than not, commit great sins." There is a measure of truth in that, but historical greatness does not excuse grave sin, as I expect Genovese would agree.

I have read all the major books on Dr. King and the movement that he led, and the best, in my judgment, is the late Ralph Abernathy's *When the Walls Came Tumbling Down*. The book was savaged by reviewers and soon went out of print, because it sometimes showed King in a unflattering light and, perhaps more important, because it made clear the utterly bourgeois intentions of the original civil rights movement. But Abernathy knew Dr. King better than anyone, and his account rings true.

The greatness of Dr. King was in his articulating with unparalleled public effectiveness the truth that the only American future that is socially sustainable and morally acceptable is a future of "black and white together." And the truth that people should be judged "not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." That his own character was deeply flawed is a judgment that cannot be denied. But he was a friend, a leader of genius, and one of the most impressive human beings I have known. He has now faced a judgment infinitely more important than ours, and I pray it is a judgment of mercy. Meanwhile, his name is rightly held in public honor, not as a model of Christian sanctity but as a representative of the belief that "the American dilemma" of black-white relations is not beyond hope. In the face of mounting separatisms and counsels of despair, both black and white, that is a belief to be carefully cherished.

FT

HARVESTING THE KILLING FIELDS

In June of 1994, the American Medical Association's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs issued an opinion that permitted the "harvesting" of organs for transplant from living infants with anencephaly (see Gilbert Meilaender, "Second Thoughts About Body Parts," page 32 in this issue). The idea, and the practice, is that doctors and hospitals would target anencephalic babies; not waiting for the infants to die, but killing them by a timetable that permits snatching the functioning organs from their still live bodies. (Or does "body snatching" apply only to the dead?) Worse, if there is a worse, the Council's opinion seemed to endorse a "higher brain function" criterion for determining candidates for organ harvest, thereby opening the door to the medically sanctioned, time-tabled killing of whole classes of patients: coma victims, those with severe mental disabilities, and a good many of the dying whose organs may be in demand.

After three requests from the AMA's House of Delegates for reconsideration, the Council at last reversed its opinion in December of 1995. The driving motive may have been fear of something like an insurrection in the AMA. Although they were defeated, two proposals to limit the Council's power—one from the Young Physicians Section and another from the Utah delegation—reached the floor of the House of Delegates. The Council, however, gave scientific reasons for its reversal: imperfect diagnostic tools for the determination of anencephaly and lack of proof that anencephalic babies lack consciousness.

Any defeat of the forces bent on turning doctors into active killers is to be applauded, as is any affirmation of care for patients put at risk by the flaccidity of current medical ethics. The cited reasons for the Council's reversal, however, leave untouched, and may reinforce, the disturbing notion that medically determined "higher brain function" is the right definition of human death. The pressures and temptations to "harvest" the organs of still-living patients are powerful, and it is widely agreed that effective regulation is almost impossible under that definition of death.

Chicago's Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, addressing the AMA House of Delegates at the same December session in which the Council reversed its stand on anencephalic infants, reminded the AMA members that medicine is a vocation. Some doctors "have succumbed to the siren songs of scientific triumph, financial success, and political power," and have thus allowed medicine to grow "increasingly mechanistic, commercial, and soulless." To "renew their covenants" doctors need to remember that they

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have "moral obligations" far beyond their legal or contractual ones.

The AMA's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs knows that one point of medical ethics is the protection of patients from the activities of unethical doctors. What apparently is not fully understood is that the protection of patients requires the protection of doctors against those who would make them agents of death. Every doctor faces hard cases and, in consultation with families and others concerned, knows that there is a time when dying must be allowed to take its course. There is a very big difference between such cases and the killing of a living patient, even though some ethicists seem eager to fudge the difference. The Ramsey Colloquium (FT, February 1992) got it right in setting out the imperative "always to care, never to kill." That is no less true when caring means simply alleviating pain and being with, waiting with, the dying. When there are organs that are in demand the thought arises, almost inevitably, that the dying might yet do some good by dying a little sooner. The AMA reversed the decision that doctors should act on that thought in one limited case, but it is by no means evident that the AMA has recognized the evil of the thought itself. Medical ethics is about protecting patients by controlling unethical practices, but the understanding of what is ethical is dangerously pliable unless it is understood that the constituting mandate of medicine is always to care, never to kill.

FT

The Fact of the Matter About Catholic Politics

"How and Why the Catholic Church Engages the Body Politic." That's the title of a detailed address delivered at Colorado College last fall by Mark Chopko, general counsel to the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC). Published in the December 7, 1995 issue of *Origins*, the address invites a careful reading, and not only by Catholics. Mr. Chopko is a gifted lawyer, but he is a lawyer, and it is therefore not surprising that his reflection is marked by an intense concern—one might almost say obsession—with protecting the Church's tax exemption. This requires, in his view, the repeated assertion that the political positions of the USCC can in no way be called partisan. "The fact of the matter is," he says, "because of the diversity of the Church's agenda, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to categorize Catholics. What the bishops offer is a set of values and principles as well as broad experience in dealing with those in need. In brief summary, what the Church affirms and promotes is human rights, and it denounces and condemns violations of those rights."

"The fact of the matter" is by no means so evident. So many commentators have pointed out that the "diversity" of USCC positions is overwhelmingly on the side of the Democratic Party that one risks being tedious in mentioning it again. And it should be noted that this "fact of the matter" is highlighted chiefly not by conservative critics but by liberals who consistently praise the bishops for their opposition to the Republican insurgency. Note also in Mr. Chopko's statement the swift move from the positions embraced by "Catholics" to the positions defined by what "the bishops offer." On a great host of disputed questions in the political arena, it is suggested that Catholics take their cue from the bishops. Survey research and voting analyses show that this is contrary to "the fact of the matter." But the question is whether the Catholic laity should march in political lockstep with the bishops. It requires a high order of old-fashioned clericalism to answer in the affirmative.

Mr. Chopko's exposition is enlightening on several scores, but there is a deep incoherence at the heart of it. On the one hand, we are told that the bishops have a distinctive vision of the just and humane society, while on the other we are told that it is a good thing that "it becomes increasingly difficult for people to categorize Catholics." If the bishops are effectively communicating their distinctive vision should it not result in Catholics being distinctive? Now "the fact of the matter" is that the bishops are not effectively communicating their vision, and the further "fact of the matter" is that that vision is hardly distinctive, being, with a few very important exceptions, the conventional wisdom on the Democratic left. Mr. Chopko suggests that "the diversity of the Church's agenda" has the happy result of Catholics being pretty much like everybody else. That, one might protest, is a very high price to pay for protecting the Church's tax exemption. Happily or otherwise, relatively few Catholics, and relatively few Americans, embrace the USCC position of being liberal Democrats on everything except abortion, euthanasia, and school choice. One might conclude that tax exemption is effectively protected by the ineffectiveness of the bishops in promoting "the diversity of the Church's agenda."

No Order of Importance

On the distinctiveness of the bishops' agenda, there is another illuminating passage in Mr. Chopko's address. He says that the agenda "highlights" sixteen issues. "I list them, as the statement does, alphabetically: abortion; arms control, arms trade, and disarmament; capital

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punishment; communications; discrimination and racism; economy; education; environmental justice; euthanasia; families and children; food and agriculture; health, AIDS, and substance abuse; housing; human rights; immigration; international affairs and the United Nations; refugees; regional concerns: Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia; violence; welfare reform."

That's a long list, and under each of the sixteen "highlighted" issues (actually, we count twenty on his list) are numerous policy specifics. A careful reading of the bishops' 1996 statement on "Political Responsibility" comes up with a count of more than fifty policy specifics on which the bishops take a position. The bishops have repeatedly said that abortion is their number one priority, and it does appear first on the list—but only, as Mr. Chopko notes, because it comes first *alphabetically*. If abortion were designated as "unborn children" or "protecting the unborn" or "respect life," it would presumably be way down on the list. Of course, what Mr. Chopko calls the bishops' "values and principles as well as broad experience" can be extended to taking a position on almost everything under the political sun. But does anyone believe—do the bishops believe—that they have competence or a distinctively Catholic contribution to make on these many disputed questions? On farm support? On the UN budget? On organizing cyberspace? On government housing programs? On the effectiveness of welfare experiments? And on and on and on.

The vaunted "diversity of the Church's agenda" lends a measure of moral support for a beleaguered liberalism in the political arena, and the inclusion of a few issues that offend liberal sensibilities may effectively confound IRS definitions of partisanship. The end result, however, is not a vision of leadership but a catalogue of liberal Democratic prejudices joined to what other liberals view as a few Catholic moral hang-ups. In addition to the tragedy of undermining the credibility of the bishops, this political agenda is profoundly discouraging to those Catholics who believe that some questions, such as abortion, deserve more than a merely alphabetical priority. "How and Why the Catholic Church Engages the Body Politic" is a very important subject. Now that their lawyer has addressed it from the angle of preserving liberal respectability and protecting tax exemption, one hopes that bishops will take up the task of addressing that subject in the light of Catholic doctrine. If or when they do so, they will find ample sources to draw upon in the social teaching of John Paul II, which, in starkest contrast to the statements of the USCC, is more interested in the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith than in the next election.

FT

ROBERTSON DAVIES, R.I.P.

"The intellect of man is forced to choose," claimed William Butler Yeats, "perfection of the life, or of the work." The Canadian novelist Robertson Davies (who died on December 2, 1995, at the age of eighty-two) did a great deal of very fine work. But if he had ever been forced to choose between Yeats' stern alternatives, he would have decided without hesitation for life: a rollicking life, a boisterous life, a life, one might say, that strove always to be larger than life.

Davies was in fact an eccentric of the kind we don't see much anymore—primarily, I think, because it takes so much real effort to create a genuine character with which to face the world. Most of us seem unwilling nowadays to pay either ourselves or the world the courtesy of that much exertion. Of his undergraduate strolls around Oxford adorned with a walking stick, broad-brimmed hat, and monocle, a 1937 student magazine declared, "Unless someone pretty desperate comes along, Robertson Davies looks like being the last of the real undergraduate 'figures.'" From the beginning to the end of his long, enjoyable life, he never ceased to be a figure.

Without the work to back it up, however, there is something a little false, a little prissy, about eccentric character. Davies was certainly a character. But he could afford to be, for he was a worker as well. In 1990, he delivered for the Institute on Religion and Public Life our annual Erasmus Lecture (published as "Literature and Moral Purpose" in FT, November 1990). It was a typical Davies performance: a literary stroll so charming that the listeners hardly noticed the extent to which they had been brought around to share the lecturer's sensibility. Davies had real learning—his first work was a significant study of boy actors in Shakespeare—and he had the charm and skill to wear his learning well.

It is on his novels that Davies' reputation ultimately rests, though novel writing was for him almost an afterthought following his earlier careers in journalism and the theater. After a successful undergraduate career in Oxford's dramatic society, Davies worked as a stage manager at London's Old Vic theater before returning to Canada. Working for a newspaper in Ontario, he created and popularized the social commentator "Samuel Marchbanks," a distinctly Canadian curmudgeon. (Davies was also an inveterate practical joker: he once wrote a hilarious piece for a Canadian magazine accusing himself of plagiarizing from Marchbanks.) Though successful in journalism, he never found quite the success he sought in the theater, and in 1951 he turned an idea for an unproduced play about an amateur production of Shakespeare's *Tempest* into *Tempest-Tost*, his first novel. The rest, as they say, is history. Eleven novels followed, at least three of

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which made him a perpetual candidate for the Nobel Prize: the Dickensian *Leaven of Malice*, the Jungian *Fifth Business*, and the Rabelaisian *The Rebel Angels*.

Whether or not he actually deserved the Nobel Prize is a question I leave for other heads to ponder. In his later years, as the head of Massey College, a graduate school at the University of Toronto, Davies found the ideal reward for his lifetime of work in Canadian letters and the ideal setting for his large character. The thought that there will be for us no more of his novels—with their high Anglican squabbles (Davies was received into the Church of England in the late 1930s), their deep knowledge of human foibles, and their real love for humankind—is a sad one. So, too, is the thought that there will be for us no more of his jokes, his charm, and his style. Our loss is the angels' gain.

FT

While We're At It

■ A lot of you—and I mean a lot—have still not sent us names of family members, friends, and associates who should be FT subscribers. We will check the names against our subscriber list, just in case some are closet subscribers who have not let on to you that they go in for such high-class reading. To the rest we will send a letter saying that you suggested we get in touch and offering them a free sample issue. Think of how grateful they will be to you.

■ So how come, a seminarian wants to know, there is no mention of poetry in my discussion of preaching in *Freedom for Ministry*, especially since I frequently employ poetry to homiletical ends. A good question to which I have no good answer. But I've tried to make amends; for instance, in these pages by warmly recommending *Chapters Into Verse*, the two volumes, one on the Old Testament and one on the New, edited by Robert Atwan and Laurance Wieder, and published by Oxford. It is a collection demonstrating that the dearth of good religious poetry is a recent and, one may hope, temporary thing. The presence of poetry in the sermon points to the excitement of language that is compact, concise, and crafted to say just this and not that. Of course, the words of the homily surrounding it may suffer by comparison, but I think they more often benefit from a borrowed excellence. This is brought to mind by a seminarian's question, and by the coming Pasch that celebrates Israel's salvation that issued in resurrection light to the gentiles, and by brousing in the works of the eccentric, maybe mad, Ezra Pound who in the "Ballad of the Goodly Fere" has Simon the Zealot reflecting on his mate who was and ever is.

I ha' seen him cow a thousand men
On the hills o' Galilee,
They whined as he walked out calm between,
Wi' his eyes like the grey o' the sea,

Like the sea that brooks no voyaging
With the winds unleashed and free,
Like the sea that he cowed at Genseret
Wi' twey words spoke' suddently.

A master of men was the Goodly Fere,
A mate of the wind and sea,
If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere
They are fools eternally.

I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' they nailed him to the tree.

■ In Kenosha County, Wisconsin, they are clearly defining obscenity down. District Attorney Robert Jambois has been trying to hard to get a conviction against stores selling really dirty videos, but in case after case he is foiled by jurors who apparently take pornography in stride. On one jury, Nancy Rains and another woman were the only ones who had not visited an adult (read adolescent) video store. An elderly woman, Ms. Rains said: "I did think the video was too long and I can't believe they had us watch it for so long. But they had to prove the video met all the criteria of obscenity and I don't think they did. At the beginning of the video I was very embarrassed. There were some scenes that were pretty sad . . . like two men on one girl. But we all thought that for the video to be abnormal and obscene it had to involve kids or animals." Thus spake Middle America. The notoriously correct *Milwaukee Journal Sentinal* is not happy with the acquittals but certainly does not want to be perceived as supporting censorship. Feminism is something else. The editors write, "Among the Academy Award-winning scenes was one showing men urinating on a woman. It was a 'stupid' movie, said one juror, adding that some of his fellow jurors could hardly keep themselves from laughing. Perhaps those individuals would like to change places with the woman." But what if the woman enjoys that sort of thing, and is paid the minimum wage to boot? DA Jambois is determined to go ahead with further prosecutions, despite the apparent unavailability of jurors who do not patronize porn shops. "I was quite astonished," said Jambois, "because certainly two-thirds or three-fourths of the people I know haven't gone out and watched these videos. Not that I know of anyway." Now that Times Square is being cleaned up, might Kenosha be next?

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■ At the Washington Dulles Airport Hilton Hotel, the National Fatherhood Initiative will hold a summit on religious communities and the advancement of pro-family change on Friday, May 17. For information call Jeffrey Trimbath at (717) 581-8860.

■ I used to go to a lot of movies. I don't anymore. We even thought of running movie criticism in FT, but that didn't work out, not least because the long production time of a monthly makes it difficult to stay even within hailing distance of au courant. But for some reason, I don't know why, I went to see Ian McKellen's *Richard III*. I should have stood in bed, as we used to say in Brooklyn. The movie sets the play among British royals and nobility in the Hitler-haunted 1930s. Let Terrence Rafferty of the *New Yorker* take it from here: "The Fascist regalia seems oddly beside the point. The notion that Richard is a vicious thug certainly isn't a fresh insight, and the swanky costumes and decor ultimately create more distractions than revelations: for most of the movie, you can't help wondering whether this Richard, in his battlefield death scene, will have to cry out, 'My kingdom for a jeep!' (He doesn't, but the scene is plenty silly nonetheless.) The obtrusive ingenuity of the theatrical concept gives the whole spectacle a preening, self-infatuated quality—an inexpressive veneer of chic." Rafferty goes on in this vein, concluding with this: "The new *Richard III* is as unnaturally proportioned as its hunchbacked central character, who, by his own description, is: 'Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time / Into this breathing world, scarce half made up, / And that so lamely and unfashionable / That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.' This movie is so misshapen it could make basenjis howl." I didn't howl, but what I found so very disagreeable was the way, from the opening monologue to his violent death accompanied by Al Jolson's "I'm Sitting on Top of the World," Ian McKellen wants the audience to know that he despises this silly little melodrama by that Shakespeare fellow. Without the slightest evidence of any warrant, Mr. McKellen presents himself as so very superior to this vehicle in which he has deigned to exhibit his theatrical talents. But enough on that. I am going to try to see *Sense and Sensibility*. The most sensible people are raving about it. Who would have thought it, suddenly Jane Austen is popping up everywhere. Yes, I know, Miss Austen would never dream of popping up anywhere. But the revival of her work is a heartening thing. Manners, character, virtue, who knows what's next? Michael Medved, call your office.

■ During the latter years of the Cold War, an invaluable institution was Keston Institute, founded and still directed by Anglican priest Michael Bourdeaux. Keston assiduously kept track of religious persecution, and religious collaboration, under the evil empire, and was stalwart in the defense of religious and political prisoners. In a recent issue of the *Tablet*, Canon Bourdeaux writes, "It is time, I believe, for the churches themselves to conduct a major self-examination of their role in relation to the churches of the former Soviet bloc. The World Council of Churches promised to do this, but did not follow through with it. Among those involved should be the former British Council of Churches, the Baptist Union, the Collegium Russicum in Rome, and dozens of others. These are pages of twentieth-century church history which must one day be written." Exactly. And when that self-examination gets underway, we have handy a little list of institutions in the U.S. that warrant most particular scrutiny. The purpose is not recrimination but the honesty, and maybe repentance, that is prelude to renewal. It is admittedly a hard truth, but no matter how delicately put, it is the truth that on the two monumental moral challenges of our time the church-and-society curia of the mainline/oldline churches were on the wrong side. The case of abortion is obvious. As for the evil empire, these churches did not cheer on the Soviet Union but they did belittle its evil, they did consistently oppose almost every political and military measure to resist it, and they did cheer on its extension in Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola, and elsewhere. A generation or two from now, God willing, there will be as much moral clarity about abortion as there is today about slavery, and the mass terror and killing that was at the heart of communism will no longer be in dispute. Then, one hopes, the painful history of the moral default of the oldline churches will have been internalized, serving as a cautionary tale for ages to come.

■ Ronald Reagan appointed Jack Matlock ambassador to the Soviet Union, and he served until 1991. Reviewers are heaping praise on his book *Autopsy on an Empire* (Random House), an account of the collapse of the USSR. The Right Venerable George F. Kennan of the Princeton Institute for Higher Obfuscation joins in the praise in a very long commentary in the *New York Review of Books*. Two things are very odd about his review. There is not a hint of the fact that Kennan opposed as reckless and counterproductive every Reagan measure that Matlock says contributed to the triumph over communism. Second, in all of Kennan's rambling about the factors that brought about that happy consummation, there is not one mention of John Paul II and the Polish struggle that almost every scholar recognizes as the beginning of the end. Fifty years ago Kennan wrote the famous "X" article in *Foreign Affairs*, setting forth the doctrine of containment. Prof. Kennan undoubtedly knows a lot, but to judge by his reflections on the end of communism, he has learned little.

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■ Abingdon Press (Methodist) puts out a "Leadership Insight Series" that includes this book on starting a new pastorate. I haven't read the book, but printed across the cover is this piece of wisdom, "A moment of insight is worth a lifetime of experience." I'm not sure what that means, but it sounds like a candidate for the top ten dumbest sayings that ever got said. Also from Abingdon, *Christian Weddings: Resources to Make Your Ceremony Unique.* Why on earth would you want to do that? Thanks to Abingdon, insights are coming fast and furious this afternoon.

■ Acrimonious is the word used to describe some of the exchanges at a forum where film critic Michael Medved urged Jews to take a stand against Hollywood's degradation of our common life. The forum was held at the Jewish Community Center in West Orange, NJ, and this account is from the *MetroWest Jewish News.* "If Jews don't speak out against this, it lets others believe those films somehow reflect Jewish values, Medved said, noting that, for the first time in movie history, the production chiefs of all ten Hollywood studios are Jews." Jeffrey Lyons, Medved's cohost on *Sneak Previews,* and the other panelists strongly disagreed. Lyons said that "Jews don't speak in one voice and are, therefore, stronger than groups that do." Victor Gold, who is on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, said that movie makers are in it for the buck, and there's nothing wrong with that. "Al Capone did not become Al Capone because he saw *Scarface* as a boy," said Gold. "I believe in the free market of ideas." Once again, there crops up this curious argument that, while good films and good books elevate people, bad films and bad books do not debase them. Medved, in our judgment, has the better part of the argument. Of course Jews do not speak with "one voice" on this or much of anything else. But the reality is that many Americans perceive a disproportionately prominent, even dominant, Jewish role in the production and defense of cultural pollution. Disagreeing with Medved, Rabbi Azriel Fellner of Livingston, NJ, said that the idea that Jews contaminate culture is anti-Semitic and, were Jews to speak out as Medved urges, "all [we would be] doing is ratifying the very thing we shouldn't be ratifying." But Medved is not saying that Jews should make a public issue of Jewish culpability in Hollywood's cultural crimes. He is saying that it is not a good thing for Jews and it is not a good thing for America that Jewish voices are, with few exceptions, conspicuously absent in current expressions of concern about Hollywood's part in the degradation of our common life.

■ Thanks to Regnery for reissuing Marvin Olasky's *Abortion Rites: A Social History of Abortion in America* ($14.95 paper). Anyone involved on any side of the abortion controversy needs to know this book. Today, some who are "moderately pro-choice" are beginning to acknowledge that a question of great moral moment is at stake in abortion, and to suggest a Lincoln-like approach to its gradual reduction, or even extinction. Olasky was there long before them. Except that he, like the anti-abortion reformers of the last century, recognizes abortion as a great evil to be passionately resisted. Among the merits of this history is its underscoring of the fact that "the good old days" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were not that good for unborn children or for women pressured to "get rid of" unwanted pregnancies. Step by step, those who understood the evil of abortion achieved what seemed to be a secure consensus on protecting children and helping women in trouble. That was among the securities shattered by the 1960s. Olasky's argument will not be welcomed by those who reject what they disdainfully dismiss as an "incrementalist" approach to saving human lives, but the story told in *Abortion Rites* provides ample reason to give careful thought to his conclusion: "What, then, are the uses of history for the pro-life movement? The adage 'those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it' states the problem backwards as far as today's movement is concerned. The goal of today's pro-lifers *should be* to repeat a nineteenth-century past in which abortion was successfully fought by moderate means under conditions that were spiritually far from ideal. Mature opponents of abortion a century ago did not say 'all or nothing' and thus save lives. Most did not demand that abortion be legislatively designated as murder, but worked for penalties that were sustainable in public opinion and in the jury box. Most appreciated the educational impact of anti-abortion laws but did not expect much in the way of enforcement, and instead concentrated on ways to provide women with alternatives to abortion. Many had great stamina because they were not laid low by a sense of failure when, despite their efforts, many unborn children died. They rejoiced that, in a fallen world, many were saved. So should their successors." One might add that, unlike today, in the nineteenth century the elite institutions of society did not militantly champion unlimited access to abortion as a "right," or suggest that such access is essential to the fulfillment of women. Which is by no means to say that Olasky is wrong, but only that the task is more difficult today.

■ The problem with gangsta rap and black "leaders" like Al Sharpton, writes Glenn Loury, is that they teach young blacks to despise, frighten, and extort white people. The result is "to ensure that bad people of both races will find each other, the better to keep conflict alive." Loury proposes an alternative: "The truth is that whites do not need to be shown how to *fear* black youths in the cities; instead they must be taught how to *respect* them. This means that effective, persuasive black

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leadership must show whites a disciplined, respectable black demeanor. That such comportment is consistent with protest for redress of grievance is a great legacy of the civil rights movement. But more than disciplined protest is necessary. Discipline, orderliness, and virtue *in every aspect of life* will contribute to the goal of creating an aura of respectability and worth. Such an aura is a valuable political asset and the natural by-product of living one's life in a dignified, civilized manner." Overcoming the accumulated disadvantages, says Loury, is not just "a black thing, which you wouldn't understand." Other groups in America have been victimized and disadvantaged and have overcome. This is not ancient history; it is happening today. Loury concludes: "A prominent civil rights leader teaches young blacks the exhortation: 'I *am* somebody.' True enough, but the crucial question then becomes: 'Just *who* are you?' The black youngster should be prepared to respond: 'Because I *am* somebody, I will not accept unequal rights. Because I *am* somebody, I will waste no opportunity to better myself. Because I *am* somebody, I will respect my body by not polluting it with drugs or promiscuous sex. Because I *am* somebody—in my home, in my community, in my nation—I will comport myself responsibly, I will be accountable, I will be available to serve others as well as myself.' It is the doing of these fine things, not the saying of any fine words, that proves that here *is* somebody to be reckoned with. A youngster *is* somebody not because of the color of his skin but because of the content of his character."

■ Home delivery of the *Times* here means that you get on Saturday the extra ten pounds that the rest of the country gets on Sunday. So one adds an hour to the usual fifteen minutes allotted to the village voice that bravely bears the ominous responsibility of telling the world what to think about, and how to think about it. It is not necessary to read it, of course, but bad habits are hard to break. The *Times* is pathetically eager to be ten minutes ahead of history. Our friend Hilton Kramer, editor of the *New Criterion*, was for years the top culture writer for the *Times*. He tells how at the weekly editorial meeting the boss editor would inevitably ask with a sense of urgency, "So what's new?" After years of this, one week Hilton decided to answer, "There's absolutely nothing new this week." Without missing a beat, the editor came back with the excited response, "Is that a trend?" Jokes aside, I was going to say something about the paper this Saturday morning. The op-ed page is loaded with heavy-duty ponderings about history. Regular columnist (in the sense that he appears there regularly) Frank Rich writes about Bill Gates and the computer revolution and deplores people who are indifferent to the high-tech transformation of reality. If such people were properly informed "they would discover that digital ignorance offers no protection from a future that will arrive whether we want it to or not." This is the future as threat to be warded off by information. Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harper's*, has a piece that offers a different take on the future. Reflecting on a new government study, he deplores the ignorance of history exhibited by high school seniors. No wonder, he says, that millions of Americans believe in the inspiration of the Bible and sightings of intergalactic aliens. Ours is a parlous state in which "the adherents of one or another of the ancient superstitions wage their furious assaults on what for the last two hundred years has been known as the spirit of the Enlightenment." (Apparently UFOs now qualify as an ancient superstition.) "Against the vivid cries and promises of transcendence," Lapham writes, "we have little else with which to preserve and extend the work of civilization except the voices of experience." So we have to do a better job of teaching history. "Defined as means rather than an end, history defends the future against the past." Past is bad. Future is good. Except for the past two hundred years of Enlightenment that taught us how to defend the future against the past. How charming in its witlessness is the simple faith of a liberalism untouched by the voices of experience. Finally, essayist Cynthia Ozick has a piece offering some sensible thoughts on the extremisms that are pulling Israel apart. On the religious right there is millenarianism that embraces the doctrine of "Forcing the End," of radical action intended to hasten the Messianic Age. On the secular left is the equally dangerous conceit that an apotheosized "peace process" will tame human nastiness and bring the Middle East a thousand years of tranquillity. "Utopianism," says Ozick, "is false politics and intoxicated history." The future is neither a threat (contra Frank Rich) nor an innocent promise that needs to be protected from the past (contra Lewis Lapham) but a tomorrow mysteriously shaped, for better and worse, by what we do today. Ozick's message is: Be very careful. That is sensible advice for the op-ed page of the *Times*. Is this a trend? On the basis of experience, one may be inclined to doubt it.

■ The Dutch Lutheran Church, which has about twenty thousand members, resolved in solemn assembly to allow the church blessing of gay relationships. The same assembly called for a theological study of notions such as wedding vows, fidelity, and blessing. Act first, think later. The Humanistisch Verbond (Humanist Society) decided three years ago to bless gay bondings. It has about sixteen thousand members. Some in Holland may be inclined to think, Why bother with the Lutherans when you can get the real thing?

■ We were wrong. The Interfaith Alliance does so have a telephone. That new organization of what

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some have called the Radical Religious Left is even sending out fund solicitations to combat the "Radical Religious Right." Dr. Herbert Valentine, whom the letterhead describes as a chair and who is former moderator of the Presbyterian Church USA, declares, "I am a minister of the Gospel—a person of faith who gets angry when the language of religion is used to cloak an agenda rested in hatred and intolerance." We might point out that a well-rested agenda is better than the weary reaction of the Interfaith Alliance, but we try not to give offense. Fully seven of the nineteen worthies on the letterhead are listed as "former" or "emeritus." There is one Unitarian, two rabbis, and a Catholic bishop (an auxiliary of Baltimore whom we will not embarrass by naming). They claim to be convinced that Pat Robertson and his minions are engaged in a campaign of hatred and intolerance to do nothing less than overthrow our democratic form of government. Apparently the rascal has admitted as much, for they quote Robertson as saying, "Democracy is the next-best government." Mr. Robertson probably said that, meaning that the best government is the direct rule of God, but for that we must await the Kingdom of God. By the same trickery one could depict Winston Churchill as the enemy of democracy. After all, he did say, "Democracy is the worst form of government known to man." Of course he added, "Except for all the others that have been tried." But then, what's a little mendacity and hysteria if it will serve to rouse liberalism from its coma? "Will you join us," the letter asks, "in saying '*enough is enough*' to Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed, and their fellow extremists?" It's nice of you to ask, but no thank you. (Especially considering that they probably count us among the fellow extremists.) Listed on the letterhead are Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning of the Episcopal Church and the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC). Bishop Browning is on record as a champion of the quest for unity among Christians, and the NCC, established to advance ecumenism, has in recent years talked about the importance of reaching out to evangelicals. Obviously, that does not include uppity evangelicals who actually want a voice in how the country is run. The letter underscores, "As deeply committed men and women of faith, we cannot be silent when political extremists try to seize for their own narrow purposes the language and symbols of religious faith." It's a touching thing to see the political moderates bestir themselves to come out of retirement and, eschewing any appeal to the language and symbols of religious faith, break their silence in calling us to return to their broad purposes that have served the country so well. Remember that these are people who have had to endure one disappointment after another, not the least being George McGovern's declining to run again. It no doubt takes a deeply committed faith to keep going.

■ The name Harvey Cox is indelibly associated with his book of thirty years ago, *The Secular City*. In a recent issue of the *Nation*, the flagscow publication of the left, Cox, a popular professor at Harvard Divinity School, has an article titled "The Transcendent Dimension" with the accompanying slug, "To Purge the Public Square of Religion is to Cut the Roots of the Values that Nourish Us." In 1975, when Peter Berger and I launched the "Hartford Appeal for Theological Renewal" that called for a restoration of the transcendent, Harvey Cox was on the opposing side in a debate we held at the National Council of Churches. In 1984, however, he did review my *The Naked Public Square* very favorably in the *New York Times Book Review* and I owe him for that. In the *Nation* article, Cox rages against "the religious right" and all its works, accusing it of, inter alia, reinstituting "child sacrifice" by cutting welfare payments. But he also uses arguments associated with those awful "neoconservatives" to both caution and bolster the left. For instance, this: "Given that most of their arguments are flimsy and theologically ill-grounded, religious right-wingers could be easily refuted if secular liberals would stop attacking them simply because they are (allegedly) religious. That gets us nowhere. That is why, unlike some other progressives, I am dead against trying to keep religious conservatives out of the political debate. The tactic of exclusion is self-defeating. It has already pushed other dissenters into dark musings about chemical fertilizers, panel trucks, and public buildings. Rather, let us welcome religious conservatives into the sphere of political discourse. After all, it should hardly be surprising that in a country where 90 percent of the people say they believe in God, some religious language will be heard in the public square. Progressives have begun to realize that to purge the public square of religion is to cut the roots of the values that nourish our fondest causes. To stifle religious dissent would muffle one of the few remaining institutions that mediate between individuals and the towering, impersonal structures that envelop them. To rule out religious imagery is to ignore a discourse that at its best can speak out powerfully against greed, ennui, and coldness of heart." FT is grateful for all its readers, even when they do turn arguments to opposing purposes (thereby, not so incidentally, refuting the frequent charge that those arguments are but a thin disguise for partisan designs).

■ July 4, 1995 was "liberation day" for fifty-two-year-old Myrna Lebov. That's how her husband, George Delury, described the day on which he helped his wife commit suicide. Delury and his wife

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lived on the Upper West Side, and when the story hit the papers he was immediately declared a hero by the Hemlock Society and other celebrants of the culture of death. Now Delury has been charged with assisting a suicide after evidence came to light that he had for months been pressing his wife to kill herself because she was a burden to him. The Manhattan District Attorney released a diary in which Delury, an editor, detailed his daily frustration at having to attend to his wife's toilet needs and counter her belief that she still had a life worth living. The diary, which he entitled "Countdown," is eerie reading. "Sheer hell," the entry for May 1 reads, "Myrna is more or less euphoric. She spoke of writing a book today. She's interested in everything, wants everything explained, and believes that every bit of bad news has some way out." But finally Delury convinced her that the only way out is death. On July 4 she drank a mixture of antidepressants, water, and honey that he had prepared for her. Shortly before her death, Delury looked ahead to what he envisioned as her inevitable deterioration and wrote, "Just taking care of the physical shell of a loved one for years is not a life I want to live." It is not the life he wanted for himself. She had to die. The Delury story is a window into the grim dynamics disguised by the chatter surrounding "death with dignity." Undaunted by these revelations, the Hemlock Society declared that the story only proves that doctors should be allowed to help people die in a professional manner. The *New York Times* editorially seconded the Hemlock Society, writing that "a sensible and caring doctor, familiar with all the circumstances . . . would provide objective counseling and professional support that would reduce the risk that a patient—or an overburdened care-giver—could make an irrevocable mistake." Someone like Dr. Jack Kevorkian perhaps. The *Times*' program for doctor-assisted suicide in order "to assist desperately ill patients with no hope of recovery to die with dignity" is identical to the practice in the Netherlands where many thousands of patients are "euthanized" each year, with more than half of them, according to some studies, not having been consulted about the desirability of their being put to death. A New York State task force that studied doctor-assisted suicide for years recently came out strongly opposed. Among the many reasons cited is that the great majority of people, and especially the poor, do not have access to the "sensible and caring doctor familiar with all the circumstances" that the upper-class editorial writers of the *Times* take for granted. If the news reports and his "Countdown" diary are to be trusted, George Delury did not "make an irrevocable mistake." He did precisely what he deliberately and over a long period of time planned to do, namely, pressure his wife into cooperating with his killing her. "Countdown" well describes the line embraced by the editorial writers of the *Times*, the Hemlock Society, and others who are so very eager to make it easier to get rid of the unborn, the aged, the handicapped, and others who are designated as excessive burdens. They much prefer, of course, that the designation and the deed itself be done by professionals.

■ *Euthanasia: False Light* is a very effective fifteen-minute video produced by the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force, just the thing to spark a lively meeting of your local discussion group on questions related to "death with dignity." ($24.95 plus $4.25 postage and handling from IAETF, Box 760, Steubenville, OH 43952. Visa and Mastercard, 800-958-5678)

■ According to Graham Walker of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the pro-choice folk have taken the bait, so to speak, in the controversy over partial-birth abortions. He writes: "Faced with the need to defend the legality of an abortion procedure that nearly everyone recoils from, pro-choice advocates have resorted to an argument with disastrous consequences for their own cause. When she said that partial-birth abortions are no more 'gross' or 'revolting' than hip replacement surgery, Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) made a mere tactical faux pas that a good media consultant could have prevented. But her principal argument against the bill constituted a major strategic error. She insisted that doctors only use the procedure when a woman's life is threatened or when the fetus is fatally deformed. And with television cameras rolling on the House floor, Rep. Schroeder asked repeatedly whether women ever agree to such a procedure for 'frivolous reasons.' Answering her own question, she proclaimed passionately, 'No, they do not!'" Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) has also spoken on the talk shows about this "horrible procedure" that is "terribly, terribly tragic" but necessary when "a mom and dad find out that this baby that they are so wanting to have in their family has gotten into a terrible circumstance." But, says Walker, once pro-choicers allow that there are "good" reasons and "bad" reasons for abortion, their whole argument begins to unravel. "Pro-choice advocates must keep their logic pure. They must continue to insist that the fetus is an integral part of a woman's own body, fundamentally no different from any other internal organ. They must insist that a woman is entitled to do whatever she wants with her body, for whatever reason she considers valid; and that no one else, not even Schroeder or Boxer or Clinton, is entitled to evaluate those reasons. Until birth—or as we must now say, until the birth process has reached its conclusion—this logic must be sovereign or else the pro-choice paradigm shatters under the weight of ordinary human sensibility. The logic is the real reason for pro-choice opposition to the partial-birth

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abortion bill, and it is why the same people would be opposing it even if it offered generous exception for maternal health and fetal deformity concerns. Of course, as the House sponsors of the legislation said, this reduces to about three inches the distance between our privacy rights and our homicide laws. And, whatever their squeamishness about pro-life extremism, the vast majority of the public will never be persuaded that the fetus changes fundamentally between the moment when the first foot appears and the moment when the last bit of head pops through (as in the case of the footling breech presentation typically used in partial-birth abortion). When some pro-choice purist without a media consultant gets around to proposing that legal personhood be delayed until the umbilical cord is severed, the game will really be up. Then even the mass public will have a hard time averting its gaze from the entire human developmental continuum. It would not necessarily follow to criminalize abortion from the moment of conception. But the new terms of the debate make it harder than ever to fudge the starkness of pro-choice doctrine: abortion by any means, for any reason, at any time, unhindered by legal, social, or moral disapproval. Extremism, anyone?"

■ My friend Neal Freeman reflects on the days when, about thirty years ago, Walter Cronkite opened his *New York Times* in the morning and over a cup of coffee decided what CBS evening news would announce as the state of the world for that day. That was a long, long time ago. Freeman describes how fiber optics, cable, Internet, Direct Broadcasting Satellites, talk radio, and a host of other developments have undermined the ability of the prestige newspapers and the networks to determine what people accept as "the news." Whether this explosion of alternative media (turning the establishment media into just one more alternative) is good or bad is a much debated question to which I have no sure answer, but I was struck by Freeman's aside on newsletters. We have all heard people say how hard it is to keep up with all the things they would like to read, and have probably said it ourselves. Freeman writes: "Our old friend Bill Rickenbacker, the Prince of Wry, used to say that his best business idea, one that he had been polishing for years, was to publish *The Billionaire's Newsletter*, which he would sell for a subscription fee of one million dollars a year. He hoped to attract one subscriber. Rick had captured the essence of the new media: while we're drowning in information, we're thirsty for understanding. Anybody who can sort out our files, anybody who can screen out the junk-mail conversations of life, anybody who can edit our experience, will win our gratitude and wind up with a piece of our business."

■ Even liberals, writes Charles Krauthammer, now recognize that something is radically out of whack with the culture, but they still can't bring themselves to address the crisis in frankly moral terms. "Accordingly, they have had to resort to a substitute language: medicine. Medicalized morality has the twin advantages of appearing authoritative and value-free. Liberalism can now address the problem of cultural decay thus: We cannot say what's right or wrong, good or bad, but we can say what is harmful. Hence, sexual promiscuity is to be eschewed not because it is wrong but because it is 'risky,' a risk to limb and life, as is drug abuse and the like. The right sex is safe sex. Teen violence is a 'public health emergency.' And the man to lead the fight against teen pregnancy is a doctor, the Surgeon General. He did such a good job with smoking. Why not with sex?" He notes that former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders wanted children to be taught what to do in the back seat of the car but was a fierce opponent of smoking. Having sex was okay "so long as they did not light up afterwards." Sex is healthy, smoking is unhealthy, so what does morality have to do with it? Krauthammer, writing in the *Public Interest*, says the medicalizing of immorality is not going to get us very far. "Yes, the victims of teen violence, promiscuity, drug abuse, and suicide end up in the emergency room. But so do the victims of hurricanes and war. Hurricanes and war are many things, but they are not medical problems. Neither are teen violence, promiscuity, drug abuse, suicide, and the other indices of social decay. Moreover, when you appeal to the vulnerable young to avoid these behaviors on the purely self-regarding health grounds that they are risking damage to themselves, you are preaching to a constituency that is not apt to buy your cost-benefit calculations." A remedy for our problems might be a religious reawakening, but Krauthammer has limited hopes for that. "I hope I am wrong. If I am, the conservative revolution will unfold in and of itself, with near-Marxist historic inevitability. It is the task of the political strategist, however, to prepare for the possibility that the Great Awakening is not at hand. In which case the arrest of social decay, the revitalization of civil society, is a far more difficult and chancy proposition. It must then depend upon the more coercive and less reliable agency of politics—a politics crucially capable of articulating cultural with structural reform. Neither alone will suffice." In the future we may have to "depend upon the more coercive and less reliable agency of politics—a politics crucially capable of articulating cultural with structural reform." Hmm. Like a politics of meaning? Historically, those who have used politics to effect cultural change have not been friendly to the virtues Krauthammer and other sensible people care about. Without a religious and moral awakening, any cultural reform articulated by the coercive agency of politics will, it seems almost certain, only deepen

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the present calamity.

■ More than ten years ago, I wrote that the religious insurgency in American politics was an aggressive defense. That is to say, millions of Americans believed that their world, the world they wanted to bequeath to their children, was under assault, and the only way to defend it was to become politically assertive. This is an analysis shared by Irving Kristol, "the godfather of neoconservatism," who has repeatedly advanced the proposition that the America, and perhaps the world, of the next century will be defined, above all, by religion. Kristol has frequently been accused of embracing a utilitarian view of religion, along the lines of those who have said it is a "noble lie" essential to society's flourishing. The evidence routinely cited by his critics is that he describes himself as a "neo-orthodox" Jew who is not observant. Whatever may be the eccentricity of Kristol's personal belief and practice, his intense interest in religion—and not simply in the social and political uses of religion—goes back more than forty years and is amply documented in his writings. Religion is a wild factor that cannot be securely captured by any end less than the end to which the religious "impulse" is directed. In the thirtieth anniversary issue of the *Public Interest*, a journal he cofounded, Irving Kristol writes: "I think it is probably an error to focus so narrowly on the role of Christian conservatism in American politics. The born-again Christian impulse is, above all, a religious impulse that looks well beyond any political horizon. It is my sense that this impulse will grow in the years ahead, whatever the political fortunes or misfortunes of Christian political conservatism. We have lived through a century of ever more extreme hedonism, antinomianism, personal and sexual individualism, licentiousness (as it used to be called), and no one who has bothered to read a bit of history ought to be surprised if it culminates in some kind of aggressive religious awakening. So the rise of Christian political conservatism may turn out to be a prelude to something far more important, involving the place of religion in American life, including American public life. Just what form this renewed religious impulse will take no one can foresee. We—all of us—could be in for some shocking surprises."

■ The *Washington Post* devotes seventy-two inches of precious column space to a story about Philip Cohen, president of Chelsea House publishers. Cohen had the brilliant idea of launching a series of books that carry on their covers, "Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians." Included in the series are James Baldwin, Marlene Dietrich, Liberace, J. Edgar Hoover, and other "role models." Despite a rave review in our local newspaper of record, the books have been a complete bust. School libraries won't buy. Says one politically improper librarian, "I certainly consider this series inappropriate for our students. After all, you wouldn't publish 'Great Alcoholics' or 'Famous Fat People,' would you?" Mr. Cohen just might. Looking back on this unhappy episode, he says, "We're ahead of our time, that's all." George McGovern couldn't have said it better.

■ There was this survey that reported that married people had four times the median financial assets of divorced people, and I said it was not clear why that should be the case. It is very clear to Henry H. Thayer of Boston, Massachusetts, who writes to point out that divorced people typically have the additional costs of supporting two households and paying substantial legal fees. That makes sense.

■ "Apartheid" in Australia seems a bit out of place, but that is what some critics say is developing there. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is proposing to set up a separate, self-governing national church organization for Aboriginals. Rejecting the apartheid charge, an executive of the NCCA explained, "There's a world of difference between apartheid that's used to enforce a power position and free space that is requested so that the powerless may discover themselves and by themselves make their own decisions. [It is] not a separation for all time but as a provision of space at this point in the history of our nation." Maybe so, but the language of that explanation pretty well mirrors the old South Africa's stated rationale for setting up separate "homelands." Whether or not apartheid is the right analogy, the NCCA proposal would certainly seem to be advancing racial separatism, a disease afflicting race relations in this country as well.

■ The awarding of the Peace Prize at the Frankfurt book fair is usually a snooze, and nothing controversial was expected when it was given to noted Islamicist Annemarie Schimmel. She took the occasion, however, to criticize Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* as a very deliberate assault on Islam. While condemning the *fatwa* (death sentence) that some Muslims have issued against Rushdie, Schimmel said, "I believe that an author who consciously insults the prophet—and Rushdie understands how highly Muhammad is revered in the Islamic world—is committing sacrilege." Hosts of authors, including Günter Grass and Taslima Nasrin, anathematized Miss Schimmel, and petitions were signed calling on German president Roman Herzog to boycott the award ceremonies (he showed up). Miss Schimmel said that mutual tolerance is a feature of Islamic culture, unlike the culture of Western intellectuals.

■ Homer nodded, we are told, so we ought not to be scandalized when the formidable Hilton Kramer, editor of the *New Criterion*, suffers a moment's inattention. Nonetheless, one is taken aback by a

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statement in that estimable journal in the course of a discussion of the poet Seamus Heaney by a Richard Tillinghast. "Under the Catholic nationalist pro-gaelic Eamon De Valera, the Republic of Ireland, once liberated from British rule, pointedly distanced itself from the British side of its complex cultural history. The result has been a cultural narrowness, where the Church has banned books, kept divorce illegal, banned abortion." Once again we have the curse of oppressive Catholicism standing in the way of progress. But in the *New Criterion*?

■ Here is another book telling us how truly beastly white folk are, and not just white folk in general but American white folk in particular. *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge) by Colin G. Calloway argues that under British rule the Indians and the whites hit it off something wonderful. Then came the American Revolution and the wholesale slaughter of Indians in order to seize their ancestral lands. The distinguished Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn isn't buying. Reviewing Calloway in the *New York Review of Books*, Bailyn points out, first, that the whites before and after the Revolution were pretty much the same people, and, second, that the genocidal propensities of the British in other parts of their empire more than matched anything done by the Americans. But his main point is that Calloway and others who self-righteously accuse Jefferson, Washington, and others of being "hypocrites" with respect to Indians and black slavery are simply wrong. The right of the strong to pillage, plunder, and kill, as well as the right to own slaves, had been assumed through almost all of human history. The new thing that appeared in the eighteenth century is what Bailyn calls the American version of the Enlightenment, with its fresh understanding of human dignity and laws appropriate to that dignity. Bailyn writes: "What is surprising, in the context of the time, is not that Jefferson as a war governor sent troops to drive out enemy warriors, and for safety's sake recommended the expulsion of all of the borderland Indians, and not that he continued to own slaves. What is surprising is that he dreamed of a different, more just world, in which humanity would be freed of its burdens, and did what he could to bring it into being; not that he retained his inherited racism but that he struggled with it, tried to think it through and to understand the contingencies that lay behind apparent racial differences. We know that in much of this he failed, but in much he succeeded. Lincoln had a better sense of historical context than the historians who now condemn Jefferson for his racism. He recognized that Jefferson remained a slaveholder, but he noted again and again, in speech after speech, that Jefferson truly loathed slavery, spoke out against it, condemned it as an abomination and a curse on mankind, and insisted that since God is just and since His justice will not sleep forever, someday, somehow, that curse would be wiped off the face of the earth. America's Enlightenment project was not realized at the time, nor has it been fully realized now. The miracle, in view of the everyday realities of the eighteenth century, is that it existed at all, that it had any kind of practical expression, however limited, in a world as brutal and exploitative as the ancien régime, and that it established ideals to which, in our better moments, we still aspire."

■ "*Commentary* Gets Religion" is an article by A. J. Bacevich in the *Weekly Standard* in which he reflects on the fiftieth anniversary issue of *Commentary* where seventy-two writers (including two editors of

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FT) address the capacious topic of "The National Prospect." The remarkable thing, says Bacevich, is the evident consensus among these intellectuals that the most pressing questions about the American present and future are not economic, legal, or political in any ordinary sense of those terms; the great questions are cultural, spiritual, moral, and religious. "In short," writes Bacevich, "religion permeates the *Commentary* symposium. This is a development of signal importance. That even ten years ago a leading American intellectual journal would provide a forum for such sentiments was all but inconceivable. That at the close of this flamboyantly secular century an influential segment of the American intelligentsia—arguably the most vigorous faction of the present-day intellectual elite—should welcome, indeed demand, the return of religion to the public square is nothing short of remarkable. The embrace of religion by conservative intellectuals shatters the image of American religiosity as the province of dim-witted rubes—an image relentlessly propagated by many in the mainstream media. It also suggests that in the days to come the culture wars are likely to get hotter, not cooler, with the so-called Religious Right increasingly well-armed to engage in high-level combat. Finally, it means that the precarious unity that the conservative movement has thus far preserved will be sorely tested. For the impact of a genuine Great Awakening is unlikely to confine itself exclusively to the realm of culture. The return of God to politics will necessarily affect matters ranging from social justice to foreign policy, most likely in ways that few conservatives today can anticipate."

■ Matt Berke, our Managing Editor, wants to know to whom we're supposed to send these sample issues.

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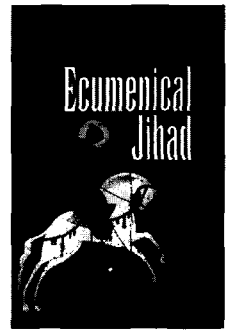

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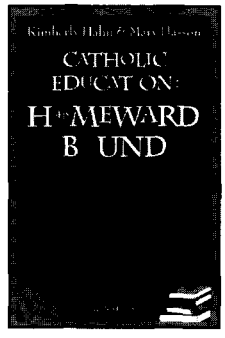

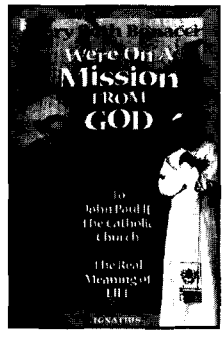

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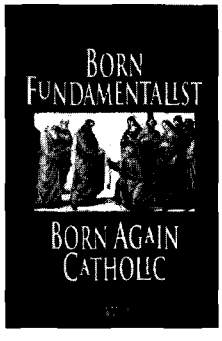

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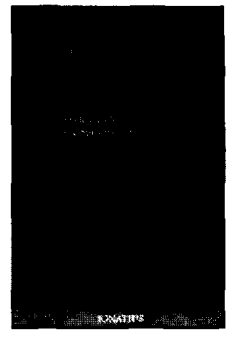

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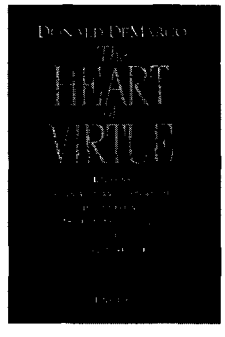

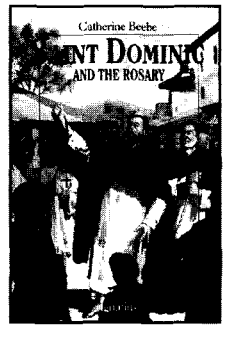

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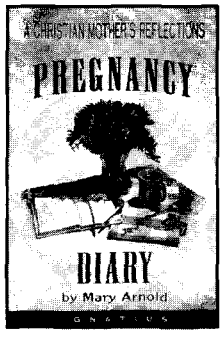

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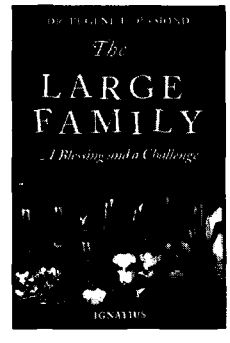

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